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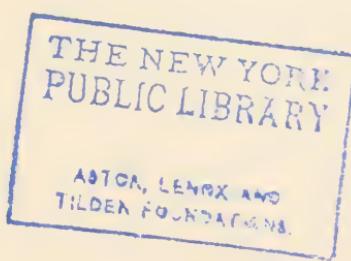
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Lieutenant Decker smilingly extended his hand to his astonished friend.
"You did not expect either of us, but we are here all the same."—Page 184.
—*The Young Scout.*

THE YOUNG SCOUT.

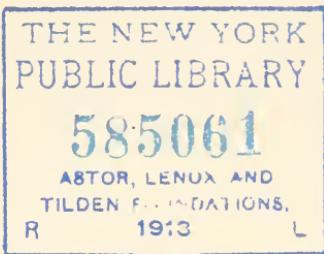
The Story of a West Point Lieutenant.

By EDWARD S. ELLIS,

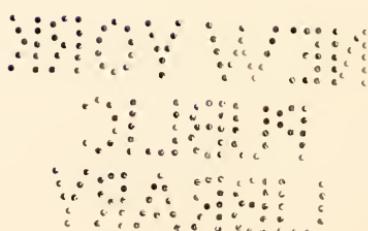
*Author of "Adrift in the Wilds," "A Jaunt Through Java,"
"A Young Hero," etc., etc.*



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THE YOUNG SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG CHAMPION.

ONE warm summer afternoon, a half dozen boys on their way home from the Burkville School, stopped to rest under the trees, which afforded a grateful shade at the side of the dusty highway.

No matter how tired such a lot of youngsters may be, they are sure to be brimming over with mischief, and on the alert for boisterous amusement. To picture them seated quiet, thoughtful and well behaved is to picture what was never seen. No such an occurrence is on record or within the memory of the "oldest inhabitant."

Among the group who reclined on the grass was little Almon Goodwin, a cripple, with a withered leg, which compelled him to use a crutch in walking and debarred him from the more active sports of his playfellows. His sunny disposition, genial nature and scholarly ability, made him a favorite with the rest, who were always glad to favor him and to accept playful annoyances at his hands.

which would have been quickly resented on the part of the other lusty youths.

The largest boy of the group was Buck Kennon, a new pupil, whose folks had lately removed to the neighborhood. He was two years older than the eldest of the party, and in growth and appearance seemed to be fully sixteen years of age. He was a rough, coarse, overbearing lad, who was feared and disliked by the rest. Three of the boys, who resisted his tyrannous conduct, had been beaten into submission, and every one felt that a most disagreeable and unwelcome member had joined the school. They would have been glad to be rid of him, but there he was and likely to stay with all his detested qualities.

The party had been lolling on the grass in the shade for some minutes, when Buck snatched off the hat of the crippled boy and dashed off with it. Almon hobbled after him, but of course could not overtake his persecutor.

"That isn't fair; let me have my hat," called Almon, halting in his pursuit; "why don't you take some one else's hat?"

The bully, seeing he was not pursued, now picked up a stone, flung the hat aloft, and as it turned to descend, let fly with the stone, which was aimed so well that it passed through the crown, leaving a jagged hole. The owner crooked his arm and raised it to his face. His parents were poor and he could not help crying over the damage done to his property.

“ Oh, what a baby !” called Buck, making ready to fling the hat up again for another shot ; “ I ‘spose your mother will give you a whipping for not taking care of that purty head piece.”

Before the hat could leave the hand of the bully, a boy dashed forward, snatched it from his grasp, and returned it to the sobbing owner.

“ Buck Kennon, you are a mean coward ! Why don’t you let him alone and take *our* hats ?”

The boy who had the courage to do this was James Decker, two years younger than the bully and of much slighter frame. He was the best scholar in school and liked by playmates and teacher. Having handed the property of the cripple to him, he turned about and confronted the big lad, who stood a moment amazed at his daring. The face of Buck was crimson with anger and all saw that trouble was impending.

“ What business is it of yours ?” he demanded ; “ I’ll do as I please without asking you about it. I’ll teach you better than to interfere.”

He made a snatch at the young champion’s hat, but James dodged and in a twinkling snatched off that of his assailant. James was much more active than his bulky pursuer, and, dashing a few rods, suddenly stopped, flung the handsome hat in air, and then with the accuracy of a rifle-shot hurled a stone clean through it.

“ There !” he said, “ see how you like it yourself.”

The other boys laughed in their delight, and the bully boiled with rage. He never had had the

tables turned so completely upon him. It was exasperating beyond endurance. Like a mad bull, he rushed upon young Decker, his fists clenched and his eyes glaring. He meant to teach the audacious youngster a lesson that he would remember all his life.

James was through running away from his enemy. He might have dodged and eluded him, or sped down the highway and escaped him altogether, but the bully would take his revenge upon the cripple, for it was just like him. Besides, a fight for the supremacy, must come sooner or later, and it might as well come now.

So Decker braced himself for the shock, and, when the big fellow was upon him, he struck him twice quickly and with all his strength, directly in the face. The shock, made the greater by the momentum of his own body, sent Buck staggering backward and almost upon his back. The blow was a fierce one for a boy, and big as was the bully he could not help howling with pain. He stopped, put his hands to his face as if to assure himself that it was still on his shoulders, while Decker, cool and collected, with one foot thrust forward, his fists ready, his face pale and his eyes flashing, awaited the next onset.

“ You are a coward ! ” he called ; “ if there was a boy here of your size, you would run like a rabbit, but I’m not afraid of you.”

The fury of the bully was greater, if possible, than before, but he had been taught a lesson. He

now approached more warily, but with the resolve that he would hammer this audacious champion till he couldn't stand.

"Decker, do you want me to help you?" called Almon Goodwin, hobbling a few steps forward; "I can give him one whack with my crutch."

"No; keep out of the way and don't bother me," replied James, never once removing his eyes from his assailant; "I'm not afraid of him."

Eyes glaring, nostrils snorting, Buck Kennon began slowly circling around the lad, looking for a chance to leap upon him unawares; but James was alert. He turned so as to confront him all the time, and did not intend to be surprised.

Suddenly the bully lunged forward. James met him as before, but in one sense Buck was braced against the reception which awaited him. He knew he would be struck and the blows that landed in his face were as severe as before, but they did not check him. He plowed ahead, and while Decker was trying to fight him off the latter retaliated several times and then clinched with him.

Buck was stronger than his more youthful antagonist, and despite the strenuous exertion of Decker, he went down on his back, with the bully on top. In a flash Decker turned him, and over and over they went, fighting like a couple of wild cats.

The probabilities are that, despite the courage and quickness of James Decker, he would have come out second best in the furious struggle. Could he have been able to hold his feet and pre-

vent his foe from closing in, he would have defeated him, but when it became a contest of brute strength he must succumb.

Fortunately at this crisis, a newcomer appeared on the scene and proceeded straightway to take a decisive part in it. The individual was a portly, middle-aged gentleman, Mr. Elgin Willard, the most prominent citizen in the neighborhood. He had lately been elected to congress, and was taking a stroll, when he came upon the group of boys, all of whom were so interested in the fight that they did not notice him, until he made known his presence in what literally was a striking manner.

Mr. Willard always carried his gold-headed cane with him. It was a present from his admiring constituents and he was very proud of it. It pleased them, and it pleased him, to take it with him to church, to his office and wherever he went.

He arrived at the moment that Buck Kennon by sheer strength had twisted James Decker off his breast and swung himself over upon him. Decker held his assailant as close down as he could, so as to prevent his doing too much execution, but Buck was savage and was forcing matters. He was one of those boys who grow so fast that their clothing is always too tight for them, so he was peculiarly exposed to the new attack that was now made in hurricane fashion.

“Bless me! this is shameful!” exclaimed Mr. Willard striding forward; “two boys fighting, and one of them twice as big as the other! He will

beat the life out of the little fellow ! It was providential that I arrived when I did ! There !”

The uplifted cane whizzed through the air and came down with a whack like the report of a fire cracker. It landed where it was intended, and Buck Kennon, with a yell of pain, leaped to his feet, vigorously rubbing the wounded portion of his body, caught up his hat and still insisting in a loud voice that he had been killed, disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust.

Now that he was out of the way, the Honorable Mr. Willard turned upon young Decker, who was climbing to his feet and brushing his clothes.

“ Aren’t you ashamed of yourself, young man ? What do you mean by fighting that boy ?”

“ I was trying to prevent his licking me,” replied James so demurely that the gentleman smiled in spite of himself.

“ You ought to know better than to attack a boy of that size.”

“ I guess he’ll know better than to attack me next time ; I’m not afraid of him.”

“ Did he begin this fight ?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ The coward ! if I had known that I would have caned him harder than ever,” exclaimed the congressman, turning and looking at the yelling youngster, who was far down the highway, as if he meditated starting after him ; “ why did he attack you ?”

“ Please, Mr. Willard, I’ll tell you.”

It was Almon Goodwin who came limping

forward. Everybody knew the cripple, and Mr. Willard said kindly :

“ Why, Almon, I didn’t see you before ; are you mixed up in this shameful business ? ”

“ The only shameful part of it is what that big boy did. He took off my hat and threw a stone through it. Look what a hole he made, and it’s the only hat I have ; I cried and asked him to give it back, but he laughed at me and was going to throw another stone through it, when Decker there called him a coward, served his hat the same way, and then Buck Kennon went for him. My ! didn’t Jim let him have it ! He must have loosened all his teeth and made his nose flatter than it ever was before. If he hadn’t got down, he would have given him the worst licking he ever had.”

Mr. Willard turned toward young Decker, who had replaced his hat, brushed his soiled garments, and was so well over his rough usage that he smiled at the words of little Almon Goodwin.

“ Young man, is that so ? ” demanded the gentleman in a stern voice. “ Did that bully attack you because you were defending Almon from his persecution ? ”

“ Yes, sir,” modestly replied Decker.

“ Young man, come here, sir,” thundered the congressman.

James stepped forward, wondering whether he, too, was to feel the weight of that black, shining cane.

“ Give me your hand, sir ; I’m proud of you, sir.”

And warmly clasping the hand of James, the happy Mr. Willard shook it with fervor, while the other boys looked on and felt that it was deserved.

“What is your name?” asked Mr. Willard, releasing the hand and looking down into the handsome face of the boy.

“Decker.”

“The son of Herbert Decker?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, now, I must shake your hand again; your father is one of my best and oldest friends; he did more than any other one man to bring about my election to congress; I suspect it was he who started the cane presentation business to me. Is he proud of you, James?”

The boy laughed outright at the overwhelming manner of the portly congressman.

“I don’t think he is; at least I never heard him say so; when he believes I need a switching, he doesn’t forget to give it to me.”

“He does, eh? Well, I shall see him about that at once. It must be stopped; I won’t allow it; I don’t believe such a manly fellow as you ever deserves it. How old are you?”

“Thirteen years.”

“Thirteen years,” repeated Mr. Willard musingly, and then with great impressiveness he added:

“Young man, I’ve got an idea regarding you—an idea; yes, sir, and it shall be carried out—yes, sir, it shall be carried out—yes, sir.”

CHAPTER II.

A WELL EARNED REWARD.

BUCK KENNON smarted so much under the castigation of Mr. Willard that he had hardly stopped his outcries when he reached home. In answer to the demands of his startled father, he stated that a big man, with a cane as large as a telegraph pole, had tried to kill him and came pretty nigh succeeding.

Mr. Kennon was naturally stirred by the news and set out to investigate. He was a sensible man, but could not be expected to submit tamely to such an outrage upon his offspring. He learned, after due inquiry, that the offending gentleman was Mr. Willard, the newly elected congressman. Seeking him out, he received the facts from that person, who expressed the regret that opportunity was denied him for making his punishment more complete. Mr. Kennon, as I have said, was a sensible man and told Mr. Willard that he had served his boy right. In fact, he was so well pleased that he promised to vote for him if he should run a second time for congress. Then Mr. Kennon strode homeward, and, as he expressed it, made his hopeful "dance," for his cowardly behavior.

The occurrence became so generally known that it reached the ears of Mr. Bryton, the teacher, who instituted a committee of inquiry of his own, with the result that Buck was call upon to answer again for his flagrant breach of discipline, so that it may be said, the mean behavior of the bully received its *all* meed of punishment. The teacher talked severely to James Decker, but felt obliged to add that, after all, he could not blame him for his chivalrous course.

“It is always manly to defend the helpless, but I don’t like fighting ; it is brutalizing and I’m afraid if you keep on, James, you will end in being a full back on some football club. Then all hope will be lost.”

Some nights after the exciting incident, Mr. Willard called upon his old friend, Mr. Decker. As the gentlemen sat by themselves, smoking their cigars and discussing public questions, the caller suddenly remarked :

“Decker, do you know you have got a mighty bright boy ?”

“Yes ; James is a good lad.”

“He’s as full of pluck as an egg is of meat. You heard about his fight with that big bully who tried to impose upon the Goodwin cripple boy ?”

“Yes, James told me about it ; I was glad you arrived when you did ; for you not only gave the scamp a good castigation, but saved James from being badly beaten.”

“I don’t know about that ; I think the bully suf-

ferred the most, even though he was on top when I appeared on the scene. There's another fact which gives me pleasure."

"What is that?"

"Mr. Bryton, the teacher, tells me that your son is his brightest pupil."

"Since he has told me and his mother the same thing, there must be some truth in the statement. It is a source of gratitude to me that James does so well."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I have hardly given the matter thought. He is only thirteen years old, and there's time enough to think of that. I presume he will be a lawyer or doctor or minister, though," qualified the parent. "I'm afraid that he may not take quietly to a calling of peace."

"There's no reason why he should not. What I meant to say is this: if I am elected to serve a second term, I shall have the appointment of a cadet to West Point; James will be of the right age; if you desire him to go there, I will make the promise now to appoint him."

"You are very kind, Mr. Willard; I will talk over the matter with his mother and with James himself. If they all like it, I will be glad to avail myself of your kindness."

"Take my advice and accept; I have already had a number of applications, though the appointment is nearly three years off. I have made no promises and, understand, that it is yours, if you wish it."

Some days later the gentlemen met again.

“Mr. Willard,” said his friend, “James is eager to go to West Point; his mother held off at first, but has given her consent, and I favor the scheme very much. So I accept your promise with thanks.”

“We will consider it settled then. Keep the matter a secret until after the next election, for I shall make any number of enemies because of the disappointments.”

“Mr. Willard, let me make a suggestion to you.”

“I shall be glad to hear it.”

“As you say, you will receive many applications for this appointment, and if you fail to promise every one before your election comes around again, each man will be your opponent. It has become quite fashionable to select the candidates for the Military Academy by competitive examination. Do so in this case.”

“But I wish your son to receive the honor and that may jeopardize his success.”

“If he cannot secure the appointment by a fair contest against all comers, I don’t wish him to get it. I have been told that less than one-half of those admitted to West Point succeed in being graduated, and in many cases the vacancies are unfilled because of the poor material sent by congressmen.”

“That I know to be a fact, and you have named the right cause. A brilliant lad may prove to be physically weak, while one physically strong is mentally deficient. The government has reason to

complain that so much time, labor and money are wasted because of this state of things."

"It seems to me that the true means of meeting this objection is through competitive examinations. The advantage is not only that the government secures the best qualified young men, but you will escape a great deal of fault finding. You can let it be known that, when you have an appointment at your disposal, that you will decide it by a competitive test. That places all on the same level, and though some parents will be dissatisfied, you will receive much less blame. So you see, Mr. Willard, that it will be a wise procedure, whatever view you take of it."

"I am glad of your suggestion; I think I shall follow it. The only objection I feel is that possibly your boy may be crowded aside by some one else."

"I shall not complaint if such proves the fact. He has several years in which to prepare himself; he possesses a fine physique; he is anxious for the appointment, and, if all this is not sufficient to secure it, then it will be certain to go to some one who is better entitled to the same."

The disastrous consequences of Buck Kennon's collision with James Decker had a most salutary effect upon him. He was subdued and thoughtful, and ceased in a great measure his oppressive course toward his classmates.

It is probable that this would have been the fact, had not his father and teacher taken a hand in reforming him. He could not forget that, though he

was able to outwrestle the young champion, the latter really inflicted the most punishment, and what struck Buck as strange, young Decker did not show any fear of him. James was too manly to exult over him, but he gave Buck to understand that if he acted again as he had toward the crippled Almon, a second fight was certain. On the whole, Buck decided that it was wise not to invite another bout at arms.

Mr. Willard followed the suggestion of his friend, Herbert Decker. He announced, shortly after his second election to Congress, that the West Point vacancy in his district would be filled by competitive examination, on a certain date which was named, so that no possible misunderstanding could follow.

In accordance with the custom, recommended by the authorities, this date was so arranged that the appointment would occur one year before the time of the application of the candidate at West Point. Young Decker, by a little figuring, discovered that, if he should be the successful contestant, he would attain the required age just one week before taking his eventful journey up the Hudson, to learn whether Uncle Sam would pronounce him qualified to become one of his future generals and leaders of his armies.

And now let us pass over the intervening years to the day fixed for the test of scholarship and ability. Mr. Bryton had been selected by Congressman Willard to pass upon the merits of the thirty

odd candidates who presented themselves on the decisive day. The honorable gentleman himself was present, and expressed his pleasure as he looked into the faces of the boys, who were mostly alert and fully alive to the task before them.

To his eye James Decker was the brightest and most promising of all. Looking down from the platform, he caught his eye and smiled encouragingly. James was tall, handsome, and manly. His frame had expanded and hardened a good deal in the intervening years, for he was one of those boys who possessed a healthy mind in a healthy body.

He was the captain of the leading baseball club and its best player. He had become that which his teacher dreaded, full back on a football eleven, but he never indulged in "slugging," or received any serious injury. He was a good runner and swimmer, and, when Buck Kennon looked at him, he thought that he would as soon tackle a full-grown grizzly bear as engage him in a test of physical ability. Conditions had greatly changed in the few years since that first collision of the lads.

"Of course," remarked Mr. Willard to Teacher Bryton, "I wish this to be a competitive examination and, therefore, to be perfectly impartial, but—that is—I am very hopeful that—or—James may be successful."

"He has every chance in his favor," replied the examiner, with a quiet smile at the earnestness of the gentleman.

"He has maintained the high standard he showed when I first made his acquaintance?"

“Fully so; there is no boy in the school that is his equal.”

“I would have no anxiety if it was confined to this school, but you know it takes in my whole congressional district. More than half these boys are from outside Burkville, and there’s no saying what will be the result; there may be one or two prodigies among them.”

“That is possible, though I think, if your district had any prodigies, I would have heard of them; I am not afraid,” said the teacher, with a glow of pride, “to pit my school against any similar institution in city or country.”

“You are warranted in saying that; you deserve credit for the fine reputation you have given it.”

At this point Mr. Bryton announced that the hour devoted to the subject of history had expired, and he would collect the papers. He passed round the room and took the documents in turn from the young men, whom he told that the next hour would be devoted to grammar.

The questions on the subject of grammar had been written on the blackboard, but were hidden from sight until now. Drawing aside the large map which had concealed them, the teacher directed the boys to go to work. From his elevation on the platform, he could detect any attempt on the part of one to help another, and this was his principal occupation, except when talking with his friend at his elbow.

“Suppose you take a look through the papers,” suggested Mr. Willard.

“Would you like to examine several of them?” asked Mr. Bryton, but the congressman spoiled the compliment by exclaiming :

“Gracious! I couldn’t tell whether half the answers are right. What little I ever knew about history was forgotten long ago, and, as for grammar, I doubt whether I can tell a conjunction from a noun.”

“You do yourself injustice,” laughed the teacher, who selected James Decker’s papers from the collection. His experienced eye ran rapidly down the pages, making little jots in the way of memoranda, until he reached the end.

“How has he made out?” anxiously asked Mr. Willard.

“His papers are perfect; I have marked him one hundred.”

“Good! none can beat that.”

“Some, however, may equal it. Let me look through these, which are very neatly prepared.”

Sure enough, those papers also were perfect as were the third. Mr. Willard began to feel uneasy.

“The questions are comparatively easy; the real test will be in mathematics, which is the favorite branch at West Point. That is the last subject and will occupy two hours this afternoon.”

It proved to be as the examiner had stated. Although six candidates held their own in all other studies, yet in the severest test of all, mathematics,

James Decker drew away from them and came out ahead of every one else.

It will be understood with what pleasure Mr. Willard sent in the name of Decker to the secretary of war, as his nominee for the vacant West Point cadetship.

CHAPTER III.

DANGER IN THE AIR.

THE selection of a candidate by competitive examination for the United States Military Academy at West Point has not the slightest effect upon his admission to that institution. When he knocks at the door he stands precisely upon the same footing as if he were a country lad from the backwoods of Illinois or the plains of one of the territories. His selection simply carries with it the probability that he is the best qualified of the numerous youths living in his congressional district who are seeking the appointment.

James Decker joined the little multitude that were put through the severe ordeal which awaits every candidate who has a chance of becoming an officer of the United States army by means of the best military institution in the world. He was hopeful but anxious, as is every young man. The first damper he received was when two other lads, who seemed to be fine specimens of young American manhood, and were his companions in the preliminary efforts were rejected. One was from California and broke down on the mental test. The other

was a tall, stoop-shouldered youth from Kentucky, who was declared physically deficient.

The ordeal through which James passed brought out the cold perspiration all over his body. He was literally tested from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. When the medical board found no physical defect, he was set to work answering questions relating to his scholarship. This occupied three days, and when completed, the great burden was lifted from his shoulders, by the notice that he had passed successfully and was a plebe.

This was the opening of a most trying experience. Hazing is reduced to the minimum at West Point, but enough of it remains to test the spirits of a proud boy. The plebes have to play the part, more or less, of servants to the upper classmen, who are sometimes so oppressive that the young cadet rebels. He is foolish to do so, but occasionally it is inevitable. James was on the point more than once of challenging his persecutor to a bout at arms, but he gained a great victory over himself by passing through the first year without anything of the kind.

The collision came during his second year and was settled one bright morning in spring, by a battle near the ruins of old Fort Putnam, in the presence of some twenty members of the different classes who were in the secret. Young Decker's opponent had made himself unbearably obnoxious, and when he was utterly and overwhelmingly defeated, many of his own classmates were glad of

it. The violation of the rules did not reach the authorities, and Cadet Decker was involved in nothing more of the kind during the four years spent at the institution.

Young Decker maintained a high grade of scholarship throughout his course. Once he stood second in his class, but dropped slightly, and when he was graduated his standing was five. This entitled him to enter the corps of engineers, or to take his choice of the branches below that.

“The cavalry is the arm of the service that suits me,” he said to his roommate, who was from Alabama.

“It isn’t half so good as the engineers or artillery,” remarked his friend, who expected to be assigned to the latter. “I look upon the engineers as the real, ornamental branch of the service.”

“And that’s the reason I want none of it,” replied Decker; “I am going into the army to make a record and win promotion.”

“The engineers have a good thing; you are sure to be assigned to one of the large cities on the sea-coast or to Washington, where you have plenty of society and many social privileges, with little hard work.”

“Promotion is slow in the artillery; the only chance is a foreign war, and I don’t see any prospect of that. The Indian troubles in the Southwest give the cavalry plenty to do. Geronimo and the rest are making things lively, and whoever goes down there won’t be allowed to rust to death.”

"No," smiled his friend, "it will be a poisoned arrow or a rifle bullet or scalping knife. Then the climate is something like that of hades."

"All that may be as you say, but after an experience of a few years there a fellow will be able to appreciate the soft snaps elsewhere."

"But some of those posts in Arizona and New Mexico," persisted his classmate, "are enough to drive a fellow wild. A cousin of mine, now a captain of cavalry, told me that the years he spent at Fort Grant were such that he would not go through again for the biggest fortune in the world. The hot sun, the daily parade and grind, the same old round of duty day in and out for weeks, months and years in that confounded climate were enough to drive a person crazy."

"Didn't he have any campaigning?"

"Not a bit of it; everything was as calm as a mill pond."

"That's the difference; it would be the last place I would go, if it were not for the prospect of something in the way of fighting. I have been studying matters and making inquiries, and there is reason to hope that things will hum in the Southwest before you and I have time to grow our mustaches."

"Well, Decker, you are welcome to it; give me the artillery."

So it came about in the natural order of things that Second-Lieutenant Decker was assigned to Fort Reno in Arizona. Full of ambition and hope, he bade his friends good-by and made the long journey

to that section, his spirits unaffected by the flaming weather and the desolate appearance of the half civilized region through which he was compelled to pass, a portion by stage and much by horseback.

The letter which Lieutenant Decker wrote to his old classmate, who had a pleasant berth at Washington, was not precisely what he expected to write when bidding him farewell.

“But for the prospect of active service,” he said, “I would agree with many of my old friends, including yourself, that I made a great mistake. This is one of the most frightful regions of our glorious country. If it was not that the atmosphere is dry no one could stand it. Human beings would be driven out as from Sahara, but no one knows what he can undergo until he makes the experiment. Trouble is certain to come with the Apaches and I am as confident as ever that if I can bring my scalp out of the flurry I shall win promotion, which you know is the dream of all of us.”

Having located the brave young lieutenant in his new quarters, with his dreams of glory, some attention must now be given to others with whose fortunes he became closely identified before he had spent a year at Fort Reno in Arizona.

Maurice Freeman was a veteran of the Southern Confederacy, who had moved into the section nearly two years before Lieutenant Decker was assigned to that post. His family consisted of his wife Molly, his little boy Fulton and a girl Fannie. It was on a pleasant day in winter, when the cli-

mate in that region is delightful, that Freeman set out to ride to Fort Reno, ten miles distant from his ranch.

The ranchman was accustomed to make periodical visits to the military post, where he had a pleasant acquaintance with the officers and received a cordial welcome and courteous treatment. There were many little articles which he could obtain there that were useful to his family and which, therefore, rendered unnecessary, except at distant intervals, his journeys to Prescott, Phœnix, Tombstone and the other comparatively large towns.

Freeman was riding at a brisk pace, for his animal was excellent and the weather favorable. Ascending a gentle slope, some distance from Salt River, a tributary of the Gila, he checked his pony and looked off over the broad stretch of country spread out before him, with a winding branch of the Gila showing at varying distances across the undulating plain.

But the scene was so familiar that it excited little interest and he had not paused to admire it; he was looking for friends or enemies, as the case might prove to be.

His scrutiny of the sandy expanse was not in vain, for the first sweeping glance revealed three horsemen to the northwest, all galloping at a swift pace, and heading toward him.

“Who can they be?” he asked himself, shading his eyes with his hand and peering intently in that direction. “If I had a glass, I could make them

out, but they will soon disclose themselves, for they seem to be in a hurry."

It was early in the afternoon, and since nothing was to be gained by remaining where he was, the ranchman spoke to his horse, which instantly broke into an easy, swinging pace toward the others, who were studying the single man as closely as he was trying to make them out.

"Just what I expected," exclaimed Freeman; "it's Lieutenant Decker from the fort, and he has Mendez and Cemuri with him. Decker would rather fight than eat, and if I'm not mistaken he will have enough of it before he sees much service in this part of the world. Geronimo has been quiet so long that it's time he was heard of again, and when the old fellow moves the fur will fly."

Lieutenant Decker, as might be supposed, was fond of scouting through the country, as his superiors permitted, and when rumors came to the post that the Apaches were becoming restless once more he was reckless enough to declare that he hoped the news would prove true.

"I don't know anything more irksome," he was wont to repeat, "than to be stationed at one of these posts, with nothing going on but the same monotonous drill and parade, day after day, week after week, and through the months from one year's end to the other. If Geronimo will stir up things, I'll do my part to keep them going."

Mendez and Cemuri, both of whom were in middle life, were among the very best scouts that

had served under Generals Crook and Miles. They were White Mountain Apaches, whose loyalty was never under a cloud. They had given invaluable help in more than one critical emergency, and, esteemed as they were by our officers and soldiers, they were intensely hated by their own people, who when forced to cease their hostilities, were sullen, ugly, revengeful, and given to brooding over their wrongs.

What more natural than that while hating the white race, they should regard with unspeakable detestation those of their own people who had aided that race in conquering them? Mendez and Cemuri knew that they took their lives in their hands, when they helped the white men to hunt down the Apache desperadoes, a score of whom were enough to throw the settlements, over an area of hundreds of miles, into consternation and terror.

The fact that Lieutenant Decker and these two friendly scouts were riding thus far from Fort Reno, was evidence that they were out on the same duty that had taken them scores of miles, many a time within the past weeks.

The young man made a military salute as he recognized Captain Freeman, and all four drew down their horses to a walk and quickly came to a standstill. The lieutenant's white teeth shone under his dark mustache as he smiled, and, looking at the oval face, much bronzed under the Arizona sun, the clear bright eyes, the slightly aquiline nose and the fine figure, Captain Freeman thought he was the handsomest young officer he had ever met.

Mendez and Cemuri remained a few paces in the background, as the two white men halted with their knees almost touching each other. The Apaches had nothing to say unless appealed to, but were always ready for action, when called upon.

“On another scout, lieutenant?” was the inquiring remark of Freeman.

“Yes; we have been off toward the Gila; these fellows say that Geronimo and about twenty of his band have been there within the past three days, but we didn’t get a glimpse of them. I’m afraid it’s a false alarm.”

“You’re *afraid* it is! Don’t you hope so?”

“Well,” replied the young officer, removing his cap and drawing his handkerchief over his forehead, “I suppose I ought to feel that way, for the worst devils with copper skins are those that bear the name of Apache, but when you have to fight it’s a pleasure to know that you are not fighting ninnies and lambs.”

“But no pleasure, as I view it, to fight savages, who violate every rule of civilized warfare, who are more cruel than death itself, treacherous, fierce, relentless and merciless to men, women and children. Lieutenant,” added Freeman gravely, “I must say that while I believe you are a brave young man, I don’t like the hope you show that those miscreants should break loose again. I surrendered with Lee at Appomattox and was all through the war. I was wounded and saw hundreds killed, but I would rather go into a battle like the Wilderness

or Gettysburg or Antietam than know that a single band of hostile Apaches were raiding through this section. When the North and South fought, each knew the bravery and chivalry of the other, and we never hit a foe when he was down. Here we are fighting rattlesnakes."

"Well, captain, I often felt sorry that I wasn't born twenty years sooner, or that you had waited that long before opening on Fort Sumter, but the unpleasantness between the sections is over ; promotion is slow, and unless we can have something to stir us up, there's no saying how long I shall have to wait for my first lieutenancy or captaincy, to say nothing of the eagles of the colonelcy far, far beyond."

"Your talk shows that you are young," said Freeman, who, despite the reproof in his voice, could not help admiring the manly youth of whom he was very fond ; "five or ten years from now your sentiments will be more in accord with mine."

"I can't deny that your strictures are just ; you have a wife and two children——"

"And there are many others with similar ties ; some had them once, but have them no longer ; you know the cause."

"Of course, and therefore I am the more anxious to get at those miscreants. So long as they can range up and down the country, burning, shooting and killing without receiving punishment therefor, so long will they keep it up ; but, captain, the thing has got to end some time, and the sooner the final struggle begins the sooner will it terminate."

“There’s a big field for discussion, which it isn’t worth while for us to enter; but sometimes I wonder whether, if the right course had been pursued, this trouble would not have ended long ago.”

“Of course it would,” broke in the lieutenant with some heat; “if the management of the Indians had been left to the army, there would have been mighty little fighting, for the redskins would have been treated honestly, and that’s all they ask. It’s the Indian ring at Washington that raises the mischief; they’re continually poking their nose into our affairs, and when Crook or Miles gets everything running smoothly, those scoundrels arrange for a big swindle and divvy.

The lieutenant looked round at the stolid faces of the two dusky scouts, as if to learn whether they were listening.

“I don’t think there’s any danger of their reporting me, but I wish we could have the whole gang of plunderers right here and put them in front, when we start on a chase after Geronimo and his hostiles.”

“It would be a mighty good thing if you could,” assented Freeman, who had seen much of the frightful mismanagement of Indian affairs; “but it is as it was during the civil war: the men who yell the loudest for a fight are those who stay at home. No fear of any one of them showing himself within reach of a hostile. However we have got to take things as they are. We are confronted by a condition, not a theory. We are in danger from the worst warriors that ever scalped a woman

or dashed out the brains of a baby. If the Apaches are likely to make a raid through this section, I must look after my family, who are peculiarly exposed, as is the family of Captain Murray."

"Yes," said the lieutenant thoughtfully, "you and he are neighbors, and both of your homes are in great peril—halloo!" he added looking around; "Mendez seems to have discovered something."

CHAPTER IV.

GERONIMO.

HAVING descended the elevation to meet his three friends, Captain Freeman, like them, was on a broad open plain, which bore some suggestion of a valley. For a mile to the westward a ridge rose to a height of several hundred feet. On the other side of this ridge and close to it, wound a tributary of the Salt River. The stream was narrow, but of uncertain depth, being shallow in many places, while in others it could be crossed only by swimming.

To the westward the sandy plain extended, slightly undulating, until it faded from view in the distant horizon. Ten miles to the northeast was Fort Reno, and at a somewhat less distance, and almost due south, in the Sutra Valley, were the ranches of Captain Freeman and his friend Captain Murray, a Union veteran of the war. The two were strongly attached to each other and their families were intimate.

The reader will note the peculiar condition of things. If Geronimo or any of his fierce Apaches made a raid into the section, they would come from the westward, that is from the direction of Prescott or Phoenix, or possibly from the south. Should they

succeed in passing the scouts that were out searching for them, the country to the east would be exposed, and in that section were a number of families, besides the two already named.

The great point, therefore, was to prevent the red men from penetrating so far to the east. If they could be checked or turned back, the scattered settlers would be safe but if the subtle and merciless warriors flanked and passed in behind the soldiers and scouts, serious mischief was sure to follow.

Tidings that Geronimo had left the reservation and was on the war path was brought to Fort Reno by Mendez and Cemuri, who had caught glimpses of several of the terrible raiders. It must not be supposed that the colonel at the post contented himself with sending out Lieutenant Decker and the two scouts alone, for that would have been a piece of folly which the experienced Indian fighter could not have committed. The supposition was that twenty at least of Geronimo's savage followers were ranging through the country, and fully that number of white men and scouts were seeking to checkmate them.

Decker and his two White Mountain guides formed only one of several parties engaged on the same business. These parties expected to keep within signalling or communicating distance and to join forces, should it become necessary.

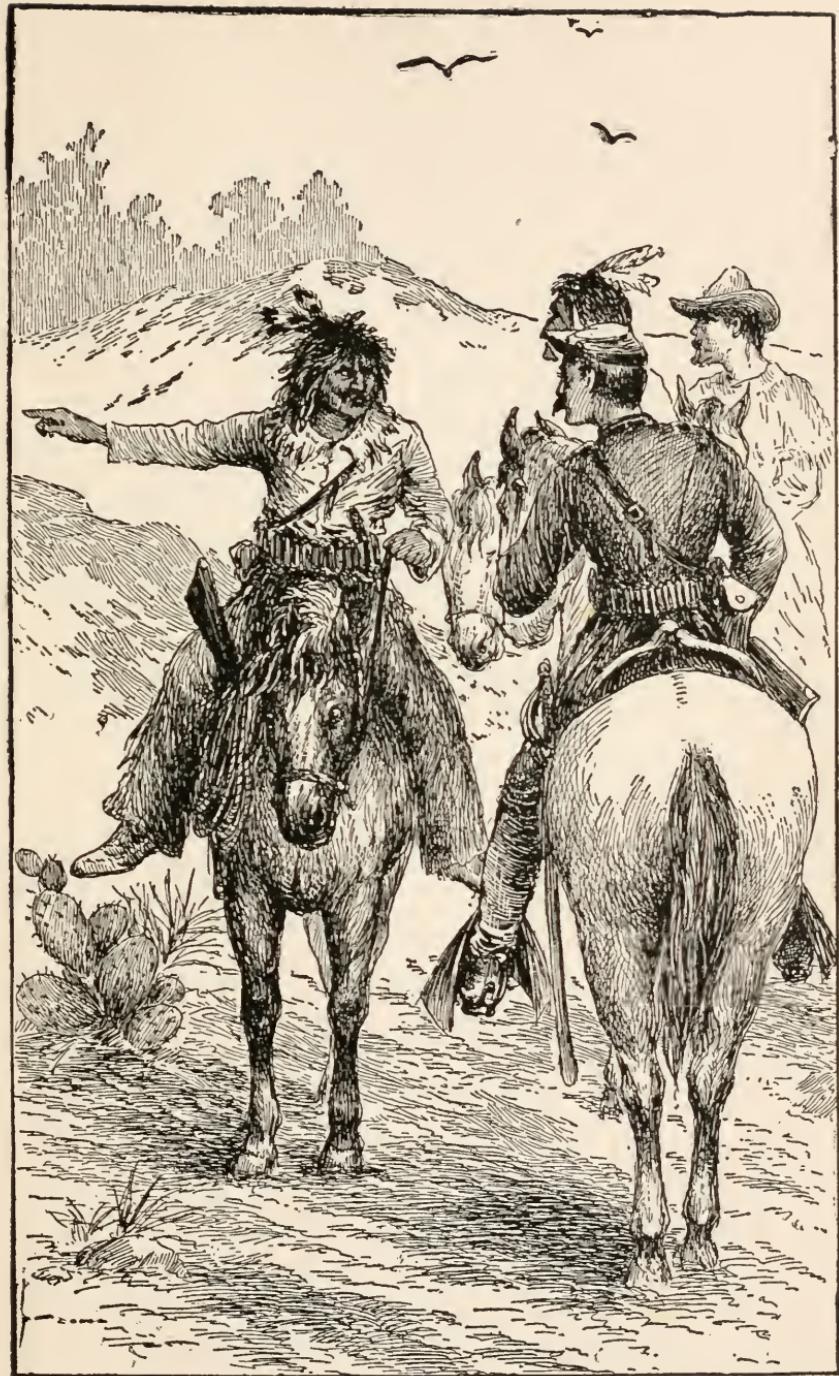
It has been said that while Lieutenant Decker and Captain Freeman were holding their brief, spirited conversation, the two friendly Apaches, sat

their horses a short distance back, taking no part in what was said, and for a time not even speaking to each other.

It would have been an interesting study, however, could any one have watched them. They continually turned their heads, as if trying to decide from what point of the compass, some slight almost indistinguishable sound came. Their fine sense of hearing was supplemented by a vision trained to the highest conceivable point, and the keen black eyes were scarcely at rest for an instant. Here, there, everywhere the penetrating glances shot, flitting from point to point so quickly that it would seem they could not grasp anything in their field of vision. All the same, however, nothing escaped them.

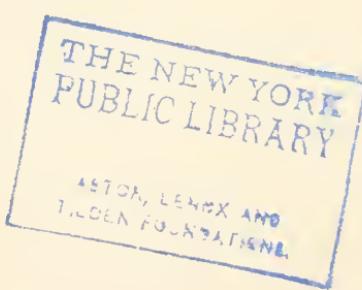
It should be said that each of the four men was heavily armed. Freeman and the young officer carried respectively a fine Winchester and revolver, while the scouts had a formidable knife apiece in addition to those weapons. The officer was in uniform, with his sword, and Freeman's costume suggested that of the professional cowboy, with the broad-brimmed hat, loose, flowing shirt, cartridge belt, excellent accoutrements for his horse and large spurs for himself.

Mendez and Cemuri made some pretense of wearing civilized costume, though their clothing could hardly have found a purchaser at a second-hand sale. They never covered their heads, the long, coarse black hair dangling about their faces and



"'Pache ober dere,'" was the reply, accompanied by a pointing of his dusky finger at the ridge. - Page 35.

-The Young Scout.



shoulders, with occasionally a stained feather projecting from the crown. No paint disfigured the countenances, which in fact could not have been made to look uglier, but they had the cartridge belt, trousers and leggings of the cowboy, most of which they would have been glad to dispense with, but respect for the prejudices of their white brethren forbade.

Mendez was glancing toward all points of the compass, in that quick, fitful way named, when he suddenly fixed his eyes on the ridge to the westward. The fact that he did not change his gaze for fully a minute was proof that something had attracted his suspicion, and the faint exclamation which followed was proof that an additional discovery had been made or that the suspicion had become conviction.

The two white men instantly ceased talking and looked at him. He did not turn his head, but peered with the same intensity as at first.

“What do you make of it, Mendez?” asked the lieutenant.

“Huh! ‘Pache ober dere,” was the reply, accompanied by a pointing of his dusky finger at the ridge.

The other three were gazing in the same direction. Whether Cemuri was equally fortunate could not be decided, for he gave no sign. Neither the lieutenant nor captain detected anything with the naked eye. The former drew out his fieldglass and directed it at the point of interest, holding it leveled for several minutes.

The ridge like the plain was of sand. Not so much as a mesquite bush was to be seen in any direction. Here and there grew a species of sand grass, which seems to thrive where there is no earth nourishment, while an occasional prickly cactus added to the desolateness of the scene. There was nothing, therefore, to interfere with the vision in any direction.

"I'm blessed if I can see anything unusual!" exclaimed the lieutenant, passing his instrument to Freeman, with the remark, "Maybe you can do better."

But the elder was no more successful than the younger. The latter turned to Mendez, upon whose face were the faint indications of a smile, and asked:

"What was it you saw?"

"One—two—tree 'Pache crawl up ridge—look ober—see dere eyes!"

It seemed incredible that the scout should have been able to detect this fact—if it was a fact—at that distance, and yet we have the record that Tycho Brahe, hundreds of years ago, did as well in the same line and his visual powers could not have received finer training than those of this White Mountain Apache.

"That won't do," remarked the lieutenant, smilingly shaking his head; "I had the record at the Point of being able to see a professor further than any of the cadets, but I wasn't equal to that."

"By heavens! he's right!" exclaimed Freeman,

who was still holding the instrument pointed toward the ridge; "*he* doesn't need a spyglass."

"When you are through, let me try it again."

Freeman handed the glass to the lieutenant, who, being shown the exact point toward which to direct it, did so with much doubt and misgiving as to the result.

"Just as I supposed!" he muttered impatiently; "all imagination——"

When he first used the instrument he saw nothing besides the bare, sandy elevation, but the words were yet in his mouth, when, on the very crest of the ridge, something resembling a crow came into sight. His first thought was that one of those birds or a buzzard had hopped up from the other side, and was peering over, but a moment's scrutiny left no doubt that it was the head of an Apache Indian, for it could belong to no other tribe and act in this manner, the circumstances being as they were.

While Decker was studying the miscreant, who took care to expose only his forehead down to his eyes, a second head appeared at its side, the movements being precisely the same. The third, however, of which Mendez had spoken, did not show itself.

The hostiles must have believed their presence unsuspected, or at least not known of a certainty to the four horsemen, for they lay on their faces and peered for a long time over the crest of the elevation.

"I apologize, Mendez," said the lieutenant in his cheery manner; "your powers of vision surpass any-

thing I ever met. Will you please tell me when the Apache on the right winks his eye?"

The scout, however, was too dignified to pay attention to this attempted witticism. He gazed long and steadily at the two heads faintly showing, and then Freeman, who was watching his countenance, noted that his eyes were wandering along the ridge, evidently in search of other ominous evidence.

All at once his gaze was arrested. He was looking at a point fully a hundred yards to the right of where the crowns of the enemies had been discerned and had detected something.

"What is it, Mendez?" asked the lieutenant, bringing his glass again into use.

"'Pache," was the response; "look dere!"

The scout was right, as Decker was quick to learn. In this instance, however, the buck did not content himself with simply peering over the elevation. He seemed to be creeping forward until he reached the crest of the ridge, when he raised the upper part of his body, so that his face and shoulders were in sight. In this posture he was evidently studying the four horsemen.

"Mendez," said the lieutenant; "you have the best pair of eyes I ever heard of, but no person has eyes which cannot be helped by a glass like this. You know that as well as I, for I've seen you use a fieldglass. Now, since that buck off yonder isn't afraid to show his ugly countenance, see what you can make of him with the aid of the instrument."

The scout complied with the request. As the officer had stated the scout knew how to use the glass and it brought a revelation. He leveled it at that hard, wrinkled, peering countenance lifted above the distant ridge, and scrutinized it with the intensity of a man seeking to read his own fate.

Only a few moment were thus occupied, when he passed the instrument back to its owner who observed the peculiar half-smiling expression on his usually stolid countenance.

“Have you ever seen that buck before?” asked the lieutenant.

“Seen him—one—two—tree—hundred times.”

“Who is he?”

“Geronimo?”

CHAPTER V.

COMPLIMENTS AT LONG RANGE.

GERONIMO, as every reader of these pages knows, has been a “good Indian” for many years. He makes his home among civilized people, has acted as usher at the dedication of a schoolhouse and believes in education. No fault can be found with the old chieftain in these times, but only a few years ago, he was the most terrible scourge of the southwest border.

The outrages committed by him and his desperadoes are matters of history, as are the hardships and sufferings undergone by our soldiers in their desperate efforts to run him to earth. There was a universal sigh of relief among the ranches and settlements of Arizona, when it became known of a certainty that Geronimo and his principal associates had been taken eastward and would never again be permitted to place foot west of the Mississippi.

We are writing of the trying period preceding the capture of this Apache, when the mention of his name caused an involuntary shudder on the part of the bravest man.

Mendez had given such incontestible proof of his

astonishing power of vision, that when he handed back the fieldglass and announced that the Indian, a mile away, was that ferocious chieftain no one doubted him.

The lieutenant passed the instrument to Cemuri with the request that he would make use of it. The fellow hesitated but did as desired. A moment after he pointed the glass westward, the Indian, as if aware of his own recklessness, sank down until as in the case of his companions, only the top of his head and forehead was visible.

But the second scout secured a good view the moment before this took place.

“Mendez right—he Geronimo,” remarked Cemuri, as if that being settled no further interest attached to their arch enemy.

“Since that is the case, it is probable that his whole band is with him. If I had the rest of the boys at hand, we would sail in and hustle those bucks westward faster than they came eastward.”

“But you haven’t them at hand,” observed Freeman, “so there isn’t much chance of doing anything against the party.”

Having “located” Geronimo and his band, the next question for the lieutenant to decide was what should be done. Brave as was the young officer (and his companions were equally brave) it would have been madness to attack a company of Apaches, fully armed and on the warpath, and who outnumbered them four or five to one.

Those cunning warriors were at home in this

sandy waste and nothing would have pleased them better than to be assailed. No doubt they were keeping well out of sight in the hope of drawing on the little company of horsemen, who, had they ridden over the ridge, as there seemed a likelihood of their doing, would have entered a trap from which there was no extrication.

“We must make connection with some of the boys who are scouting,” remarked the lieutenant; “then when we are strong enough we’ll give Geronimo a tussle. If it should be my good fortune to wipe him out what a feather it would be in my cap!”

“And if it should be his bad fortune to wipe *you* out,” suggested Freeman; “where would be your feather?”

Decker shrugged his shoulders.

“Honors that are not hardly earned are not honors. We’ll ride to the right, and see whether we cannot gain a better sight of them. It may be that this is only a part of the main band, and if so we’ll have a fight.”

The scheme seemed to be the only one feasible and was followed. The clear sunshiny afternoon was drawing to a close and nothing could be hoped for, in holding their motionless position in the midst of the low, valley-like depression.

The young officer struck his horse to a moderate gallop, with Freeman at his side and the scouts following closely at the rear, grim, silent and watchful. The hostiles whose heads had been showing

above the ridge vanished from sight and there was no saying what their course of action would be.

Had not the contour of the country been favorable, there would have been an imprudent risk in the course of Lieutenant Decker; for it is evident that it would have been easy for the hostiles to shift their position along the ridge so as still to confront the whites who would have ridden into the trap that has already been described.

But a comparatively short distance to the right, the moderate elevation sloped down to the level of the plain, permitting a view of the winding stream which further to the left passed out of sight behind the ridge. The Apaches could not advance upon this without being observed, though (so wonderful is their cunning) had they been given more time, they would have formed an ambush, where neither wood nor elevation gave screen or protection. It would not have been the first time that members of that tribe have performed this seemingly impossible feat.

The promptness of the four horsemen prevented such a trap. They swung forward at a swift gallop, until the ridge was flanked and their position admitted a view of both sides for a considerable distance.

The result was interesting. Four warriors were in plain view, all mounted on their tough ponies and facing the white men and scouts. A space of a fourth of a mile separated the parties, when they thus confronted each other.

The Apaches immediately began tantalizing the whites, in the hope of inducing them to attack. They swung their blankets aloft, shouted, and Geronimo, riding out a short distance from his companions, deliberately fired his rifle at the horsemen. He had a good weapon, for the singing of the bullet was heard as it passed over the heads of his enemies.

“I can be as polite as you,” remarked Lieutenant Decker, bringing his Winchester to his shoulder and letting fly.

He aimed at the chieftain, and nothing would have delighted him more than to see him pitch from the back of his pony, but the distance was too great to make the aim accurate and the leader suffered no more harm than had his enemies at his hands.

“Mendez,” said the young officer, turning to his principal scout; “do you think it likely there are only four of the Apaches? If such is your belief we’ll charge them.”

The sagacious scout grimly shook his head.

“More—plenty more—hide in sand—want us to fight ‘em.”

“But where are their ponies?”

“Hide ‘em easy—lay down—cover ‘em wid sand—go in water—only nose stick out.”

Nothing would have pleased Geronimo more than to be attacked. In his broken English he called out taunts so insulting that the swarthy cheek of Lieutenant Decker flushed. How he would have leaped at the chance of a fight with him on anything like equal terms!

The chieftain now rode his pony more than a hundred yards in a straight line toward the group. His animal walked slowly and his rider continued to shout his taunts.

Lieutenant Decker, holding his horse well in hand, advanced the same distance toward Geronimo.

"What do you intend to do?" sternly asked Freeman.

"I'll take care of myself," was the quiet reply.

"I don't know whether you will or not," added Freeman, with no little misgiving.

Decker continued his guarded advance until like his enemy, he judged he had gone far enough, when he too halted.

"I'll go as far as he dare," he muttered; "if he will only come far enough to be beyond the support of his men, I'll meet him and we can have it out between us."

Geronimo had ceased his taunting shouts, and, with his horse perfectly motionless sat like an equestrian statue with his gaze upon this young David. Then he did a singular thing.

All four, while watching him, discovered that instead of holding his pony stationary, as at first, he was backing him. The well-trained animal, keeping his nose toward the foe, was stepping slowly backward, the movement of his legs and the change of position being clearly seen by all.

Mendez and Cemuri looked at each other and smiled; they knew what it meant. Geronimo was

seeking to lure the young officer away from his supports, or, better still, striving to tempt forward the whole four, under the belief that the two forces were equal.

“Don’t go any nearer!” called Freeman, growing impatient with the recklessness of the officer; “he’s trying to draw you on.”

The lieutenant made no reply. His spirited horse, of his own volition, took two steps forward, but his rider checked him.

“Thank you, Geronimo, but the fly isn’t ready to walk into the spider’s web.”

Seeing the failure of his scheme, the Apache chief, with the quickness of a flash, raised his Winchester again and fired directly at the officer, whose escape was quite narrow, for the interval admitted of a fatal shot, provided it were well aimed.

As if to imitate every action of his enemy, Decker brought his rifle to a level and sighted carefully at Geronimo. It required no phenomenal marksmanship to bring him down, and he was hopeful of doing so, but at the moment of pressing the trigger, the chieftain disappeared as if by magic.

He knew what was coming and saw his danger. He flung himself over the side of his pony, whose body was thus interposed as a shield. Not to be baffled, the officer sighted as best he could and fired.

He did not harm the chieftain, but the bullet passed through the brain of his pony, who, with a cry of agony, reared on his hind legs, pawed the air and rolled over as dead as Julius Cæsar. His

agile rider, who had no saddle, leaped free and ran hastily back to his companions, amid the jeering shouts of the youth who had unhorsed him.

“Geronimo is a squaw! He runs from the white man! He dare not come forward and fight him! He is afraid he will be hurt!”

All which, if it were so, did not change the situation or give any additional advantage to him who uttered the taunts.

CHAPTER VI.

A P A C H E C U N N I N G .

ENOUGH has been told to prove the surpassing cunning of the two White Mountain Apaches who served as scouts. Once they had been among the fiercest of the followers of the fearful scourge of the border and were fully trained in his ways.

Captain Freeman was an old campaigner and had lived sufficiently long in Arizona to learn much of the methods of the hostiles, while Lieutenant Decker had made the matter his study for weeks.

And yet, despite all this and the fact that each one of the four knew that the Apache leader and his warriors were doing their utmost to lure the horsemen to their ruin, the red men came within a hair of doing so.

Only by the merest chance or accident or providence, as it may be termed, was the ingenious scheme detected in time to thwart it.

Naturally the eyes of the three horsemen in the background were fixed upon Decker and Geronimo, with glances at the warriors beyond, who were in direct range of vision, and who were watching events with apparently the same interest.

What induced Maurice Freeman to withdraw his

gaze from his young friend and their enemies he could never explain, but he did so for a single instant, looking to the left of the ridge, and somewhat toward the spot where the four had been in consultation when they first discovered the Apaches. His eyes were roving over this sandy stretch when he saw something move. At first glance it was as if some burrowing animal had stirred a hummock of sand, while the animal itself was underneath and out of sight.

Wondering what it could mean, and vaguely suspecting mischief, Freeman forgot the lieutenant and Geronimo for a minute, while he watched the strange manifestation.

To his amazement, several places in the sand were similarly agitated, the disturbance showing that whatever caused it was approaching the horsemen.

Suddenly the truth flashed upon Freeman. The curious movement was caused by several Apache warriors, who, it may be said, were burrowing their way like moles through the sand, and making so little display of what they were doing that even Mendez and Cemuri did not detect them, and only the merest accident, as has been shown, revealed the dangerous artifice to Freeman.

The Apaches had but to approach a little closer, when they would secure an aim which would empty every saddle.

“Lieutenant!” called Freeman, “we must retreat at once or we’ll be surrounded!”

Decker did not pause for an explanation, but whirled his horse and came tearing back on a dead run. Before he could rejoin his comrades, they were on the move, the scouts, now that their fears were aroused, having been quick to learn the nature of the peril.

The flight was so sudden that the Apaches, stealing up in this ingenious manner, did not suspect the meaning of the sudden flight until all four had ridden some distance. Then the miscreants, of whom there were four—just enough to carry out the scheme—still groveling in the sand, took quick aim and fired at the fleeing horsemen.

This time one of the bullets passed through the fleshy part of Cemuri's thigh, inflicting a painful wound, though he made no reference to it, and it was not discovered by his companions until some time later.

It may be admitted that only one fact saved the four from death. Each was mounted on a horse, the equal if not the superior of any ridden by the Apaches, although, as is well known, those people are always provided with good animals when on their raids. If pursued, they have the advantage of fresh horses, continually renewed while on the run before a superior body of pursuers.

The parties had been too near each other, and without giving any time to discussion or consultation, the four devoted the next fifteen minutes or half an hour to skurrying off as fast as they could. Finally, thanks to the fleetness of their animals, they drew rein and dropped to a walk.

Before this the Apaches had discovered that it was useless to try to overtake the little party and had given up the attempt. For the present nothing was to be feared from them.

“There is reason to believe they will not push any further eastward,” said Freeman, giving expression rather to his hope than his conviction.

“Why do you think that?”

“They have learned that their presence is known in this neighborhood and that a force will be sent out from the fort, if it has not already been sent—halloo!”

The speaker, happening to glance at Cemuri, was shocked to observe the startling effects of his wound. The exclamation of Freeman caused the others to note the same, and the horses came to a halt.

“That looks bad,” remarked the lieutenant; “let me examine it.”

“Huh! no hurt—soon be well,” said Cemuri, with a look of contempt, and displeased at the expressions of sympathy.

“It may get well if it’s attended to,” was the comment of Decker, who insisted upon an inspection of the hurt.

It did not seem to be dangerous, but it was clear that it required attention. From the clothing of different ones were torn sufficient bandages to stanch the flow, and despite the indifference of the scout he must have felt extreme pain.

“I remember just such wounds in the army,”

commented Freeman ; "little was thought of them at first, but many a death came from their neglect."

" His people are tough and have little faith in surgery."

" Which may all be the case and not affect the truth of what I have stated."

" When the rude service was finished, the lieutenant said :

" Cemuri, you must go to the fort as soon as you can."

The dusky face showed anger and the scout shook his head.

" Me no pappose—me warrior—me scout!"

" And a very good one too—so good that we want to save your services to us. I don't believe that wound will kill you, old fellow, unless it is neglected, but it is going to lay you up for a time. You won't be able to do yourself justice till your leg gets well, and that will take place sooner at the fort than in the saddle."

Cemuri looked appealingly at Mendez. Why did he remain mute and not come to his relief ? His opinion would have great weight.

But Mendez shook his head.

" Leg no good, for one—two—tree—many days—go to fort—do what *he* say."

The last prop knocked from under him, the brave fellow submitted. He was sullen, and without a word started his horse eastward toward Fort Reno.

" I meant to give him some orders," remarked the

officer with a laugh ; "for the colonel ought to know the particulars, but the fellow is huffy."

"He will give the colonel all the news, have no fear about that."

When Cemuri had ridden some distance, and had time to rally from the irritation into which he was thrown by the command of the young officer, he must have felt that it was all for his good. He was suffering much ; he had lost strength and was so weak, despite his indurated frame, that he felt dizzy and weak, with occasional spells when it was hard to keep in the saddle.

Night was drawing on, and he could not hope to reach the post until long after darkness had come. But his horse was strong and fleet, and such a thing as failure to complete his task did not enter his thoughts.

The stream which had been in sight so long now made a sharp curve northward, so that it was speedily left out of sight. The ride to the post was over the same open plain which had been traversed most of the day. The sky was clear and the moon rose early, making the ride as pleasant as if the sun were shining.

The American Indian, as all know, can bear with equanimity more suffering and grievous wounds than his white brother, but there is of necessity a limit to the toughest frame that nature ever put together, and Cemuri, the White Mountain scout, began to suspect that he had struck or was about to strike that limit.

He had ridden less than three miles at a swinging gallop when he drew his horse down to a walk; the jolting of the speedier gait was unbearable. As he made the change of pace, he first looked around to be sure no one saw him. Then he gave expression to his views in the form of an English expletive, altogether too vigorous to be recorded in these pages.

In one respect the scout was specially favored: his pony was not only well trained, but possessed unusual intelligence. He had given his master warning many a time of the approach of danger and he now did it once more.

The slow, steady walk through the soft sand was suddenly checked, the pretty head elevated, the ears thrown forward, and a slightly vigorous expiration followed through the silken nostrils, yet not loud enough to be heard a dozen yards away.

There was but one possible interpretation of this demonstration, and the rider knew on the instant what it was. Had he been himself, he would have remained in the saddle, but he was in no condition to make a fight, and he deftly dismounted, despite the stinging pain caused by moving his limb.

No sooner were his feet on the ground that his pony lay down. His purpose was to lessen his danger of discovery by an approaching enemy or stranger. Cemuri knelt beside him with rifle ready for instant use.

Hardly had these precautions been taken, when two shadowy horsemen, barely visible through the

gloom, entered the field of vision and immediately passed out again. They came from the direction of the fort and were riding toward the little party of Lieutenant Decker. They were Indians, and, though Cemuri could not be absolutely certain in the gathering darkness, he was convinced that they were Maroz and Ceballos, two Apaches whom he thoroughly distrusted.

CHAPTER VII.

A SIGNAL.

LIEUTENANT DECKER and his friends held their position for some time after the departure of Cemuri on his return to Fort Reno. Although they had left the stream, which had served them as a partial guide for a number of hours, they were not far from it, and the young officer was inclined to think it was the part of wisdom to stay in its vicinity.

The situation may be explained thus:

Geronimo and his band were evidently aiming to reach the more exposed ranches and dwellings to the eastward in the Sutra Valley, although when on their raids it seemed to matter little to them where they struck their terrible blows. Nothing was to prevent the swift riders from sweeping through the section whenever they chose, but brave and reckless as they were, they did not shut their eyes to peril.

From what had occurred they knew that their presence was discovered and that movements were already under way to check them. They had seen scouts from Fort Reno, and may have known that others were scouring the country. If the hostiles pushed on, they might find a strong party of cavalry

in their rear or on their flanks, with the certainty of losing some of their best warriors before the rest could escape.

Lieutenant Decker's anxiety now was to open communication with a party of his friends and arrange an attack upon the Apaches. Could this be done within the next few hours, Geronimo would be frustrated and compelled to withdraw without striking one of his fearful blows.

Until such junction could be effected, the officer wished to keep up a demonstration in front of the bucks, or show such activity that even if it failed to turn them back, it would retard or check their raid until the soldiers could do something more effective. It would seem that a decisive blow ought to be struck against the raiders within the next twenty-four hours.

This will make clear why after having retreated part way to the fort, Decker halted, unwilling to yield what he considered an advantageous position.

But, admitting all this, the three were in a situation of extreme delicacy and peril. The Apaches had drawn off from pursuit, but, at most, were not far off. They had but to advance somewhat further along the line they had been pursuing to come upon the three horsemen, who had no means of concealing themselves. The cunning and ingenuity already displayed by Geronimo's men made it seem folly for Decker and his companions to believe they could avoid being outwitted.

Nevertheless the officer resolved to hold his

ground, or rather not to continue his flight, and Maurice Freeman was as earnest in the same purpose as he. The all-powerful motive with the elder, however, will be understood, for he was really fighting for the sake of those that were dearer to him than his own life.

On these scouting excursions the lieutenant always carried a few rations, so, while they waited for night to close round them, the three partook of food. When that was finished it was growing dark.

Pointing his Winchester toward the sky, the lieutenant discharged it twice in quick succession, following with a third report at a longer interval.

“That is a signal to whoever of the boys may hear it,” he explained to Freeman.

“And means what?”

“That I have located the hostiles and my friends must join me with the least possible delay.”

“How will you know whether it is heard?”

“I will receive the same answer. The whole thing is understood by every one who left the post —halloo! do you hear that?”

The faint but distinct report of a rifle sounded in the distance, and all three listened for the sounds needed to complete the signal, but to their disappointment there was none.

“Now,” said the lieutenant, “since Geronimo may take it into his head to renew his acquaintance with us, it is best to call upon Mendez here to help us out.”

The very suggestion I was about to make ; how will he do it ?”

Mendez and Lieutenant Decker had scouted so much together that they were familiar with each other’s signals, and no preliminary rehearsal, therefore, was necessary.

“ The captain and I will go back to the stream,” he explained to the Apache, “ and follow the bank some distance. When you have anything to communicate you will know where to find us. At any rate we will not be far off.”

“ Provided nothing unexpected happens,” Freeman thought best to add.

The scout was a man of few words and only said “ Huh !” to signify that he understood everything. Then, without more ado, he turned the head of his horse westward and rode off in the darkness.

“ That brave fellow takes his life into his hands,” remarked the lieutenant ; “ he knows he would receive scant mercy if Geronimo or any of his band got hold of him.”

“ Wherein would he differ from us ?” questioned Freeman.

“ In no respect, so far as final results are concerned, but they would punish him frightfully, for it is human nature to detest a renegade, as he and Cemuri are considered.”

“ I don’t know whether it makes him more or less useful, but it seems to me he must be handicapped in his movements.”

“ He doesn’t appear to be ; I think if Mendez or

Cemuri should become convinced that there was no possible escape from capture he would shoot himself."

"So would I," said Freeman.

"I wouldn't, for as long as there's life there's hope."

"I meant when all hope is gone."

"We may as well make our change of base."

Side by side the friends rode to the left of the course they had been following, until they struck the shore of the stream already alluded to. It seemed broader and shallower than below, but it was a winding current through the sand, which licked a great deal of water. The banks were so low and flat that a slight rise of the creek would cause it to overflow on both sides. No trees or undergrowth being in the neighborhood, the same difficulty of concealment remained.

When the full moon should rise in the unclouded sky objects would be discernible for a long way in every direction. While in some respects this might not be desirable, the two looked upon it as an advantage, since by diligence and watchfulness, they ought to discover the approach of an enemy, no matter how stealthily made, or from what point it came.

It was a cause for self-gratulation that both were so well mounted that none of their enemies could overtake them in a fair contest of speed.

"It strikes me that as the moon will not show itself for nearly an hour we may as well dismount. I

have been in the saddle so continuously to-day that the change will be as grateful to me as to my horse."

"It doesn't strike me as the wisest thing to do," replied Freeman, "though I don't know that it increases our danger. I will not dismount, since I have ridden less than you. You won't leave your horse?"

"No, though he knows my call so well he would come to me at once.

The lieutenant walked slowly with his steed along the bank of the stream, for it seemed wiser to shift their position, even if slightly, so as to prevent the guarded approach of their enemies.

"I wonder whether any of them are in the neighborhood," he remarked, as they came to a halt again; "I don't see how they can be, but there's no saying what mischief they are up to. Listen!"

The two were motionless and used their eyes and ears as best they could. In the gloom it was barely possible to distinguish the opposite shore, only a few rods distant, while darkness walled them in on every hand.

The only sound that reached their ears was the soft flow of the stream, barely distinguishable in the profound stillness. Once they fancied they heard the report of another gun, but, if so, it was so distant it could not be identified.

One distressing question pressed upon Maurice Freeman. Ought he to remain in this lonely place or return to his home a number of miles distant? His

family would not be disturbed over his absence, for he had occasionally stayed at the fort over night and had been absent longer at Prescott or Phoenix, but at such times everything was so quiet that there was no ground for alarm.

He reflected that his wife knew nothing of the threatened raid of the Apaches, unless it had come to her after his departure from home that morning. Consequently, in the event of the hostiles making a dash into that section, she would be wholly unprepared against surprise.

Freeman and his friend Murray had taken an active part in chastising a party of Apaches some months before, most of them being killed, and he suspected that revenge might be a factor in inspiring this advance of Geronimo eastward. If such were the fact, nothing was easier than for him and his warriors to push on during the darkness, wreak their vengeance and get away before the sun rose.

The question, put in another form, was whether he and Lieutenant Decker were accomplishing any good purpose by thus lingering in the neighborhood with a view of watching and possibly checking the movements of the hostiles. If the latter were bent on raiding further eastward, they could make a detour which would carry them to the point they had in view without the knowledge of the two men, or of Mendez, who had gone forward to spy out their actions.

The veteran was loath to leave his comrade, but

this hesitation was due to the uncertainty whether it was wiser to do so than to remain.

He was on the point of expressing his misgivings, when a low, soft whistle sounded on the still night air.

“Sh!” whispered the lieutenant, “that’s Mendez!”

CHAPTER VIII.

MAROZ AND CEBALLOS.

THE faint signal had only the breadth of the stream to cross and was heard by the two men.

“It is Mendez,” repeated Decker in a whisper; “he brings important news.”

“Are you sure it is he?” was the guarded inquiry of Freeman, whose longer residence in that section of the Union and greater experience with the wily Apaches made him distrustful. The events of the preceeding few hours especially warned him that it was impossible to use too much caution in dealing with their enemies.

“I am as sure as one can well be,” said the officer, who, it will be remembered, was not on his horse but standing beside him.

“If it be he why does he not come to us? The stream is not deep.”

“Perhaps he expects us to join him—sh!”

The call which had caught their attention a few minutes before was heard again.

“It will be the height of folly to attempt to reach the other bank while this uncertainty exists,” said Freeman; “I shall not do it.”

“Withdraw a short distance and wait for me.”

“Remember that those people have wonderfully

keen eyes, and they may be able to distinguish us when we cannot see them. It is better for both to withdraw."

"I will soon follow you if there's anything suspicious."

Freeman walked his horse a hundred feet from the stream, holding the bridle of the other animal as he did so. The lieutenant remained by the water's edge, where, instead of keeping his standing posture, he knelt down on one knee, a position which lessened his chance of being observed by any foe on the other side.

Peering intently in the darkness, he was able to make out the shadowy figure of two and possibly three men standing motionless in the gloom, the view being so faint that at first he doubted whether he saw anything at all.

For the first time Decker made a cautious response to the signal, the same that had been employed by him and the White Mountain scout in previous instances of peril. Again it came across the water to him, and, but for the suspicious circumstances, he would have staked everything on its being emitted by the dusky lips of his friend.

"If it be an enemy," he reflected, "I would give much to know where he got the call, but Mendez had no companions when he left us, and certainly there is more than one man standing on the other shore."

Nature now came to the help of the lieutenant. The full moon was near the horizon, almost

directly behind the opposite bank, and the slight illumination it flung into the sky revealed the forms of three persons so clearly that there could be no mistake.

“It’s a cunning trick, but it will not work this time, my good friends.”

Kneeling on one knee, the lieutenant took the best aim he could at the group and let fly with one charge from his Winchester.

This time the bullet sped true. One of the dusky forms leaped into the air with a screech and fell prostrate on his face, where he remained without rising.

“Geronimo’s band is short one member,” was the cool observation of Decker, who instantly changed his position to a prone one, in which he hugged the ground as closely as he could.

The precaution was not taken a second too soon. Quickly recovering from their shock, the other two Apaches fired at the point where they had seen the flash of the rifle, the missiles whistling so close that but for the act of the young man he must have been struck.

Decker proved his nerve by holding his position for several minutes. His hope was that his enemies in their exasperation would dash into the stream to cross to him, in which event he would have them at his mercy, but they were too wily for that. Instead of advancing, they retreated, evidently fearing another shot from the one who had outwitted them.



"Geronimo's band is short one member," was the cool observation of Lieutenant Decker.—Page 66.

—The Young Scout.

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Meanwhile Maurice Freeman was a prey to the gravest anxiety. Much as he admired his companion, he was almost certain that his rash bravery would involve both in fatal disaster. He questioned more and more the prudence of lingering in the neighborhood, when it was certain the Apaches were seeking their overthrow.

This uneasiness was intensified during the minute following the discharge of the lieutenant's rifle by the proof that something was amiss. Both horses flung up their heads and sniffed, looking not toward the stream, but away from it.

"It's a wonder we have escaped so long," was the impatient thought of Freeman; "now we are going to catch it. Lieutenant," he called, "come here at once."

Decker heard the voice, but a moment before it reached him he had begun stealing from the stream, holding his crouching posture until beyond range of the sharpest-eyed warrior. He was within a rod or two of the horses, when called to, and vaulted instantly into the saddle.

"What is it, captain? Anything wrong?"

"The action of the animals shows that danger threatens, and in my opinion——"

"Sh?"

At the same instant the forms of two horsemen loomed to sight on the right. They came forward as silently as shadows, acting as if they saw nothing of the others, or, seeing them, counted them as naught.

“Halt!” commanded the lieutenant, “or I fire!” a proceeding which would have taken place had he not suspected the identity of the two.

“Huh! Maroz—Ceballos!” replied one of the Apaches, without checking his animal.

“They are friends,” remarked the officer; “they belong to the reservation and probably have been at the fort.”

“I know them,” remarked Freeman, “but do not include myself among their admirers.”

As Decker had remarked, Maroz and Ceballos were two Apaches who were frequently seen at Fort Reno. Two years before they were among Geronimo’s most ferocious followers, but, for most of the time since, had claimed to be, and indeed had conducted themselves like good Indians. Both were addicted to the use of “tiswin,” that decoction of fermented corn, which is amazingly quick to inflame the evil passions of an Indian to the highest degree.

Despite the professions of these two bucks, and the fact that nothing wrong was known against them, they had not the confidence of the colonel nor of most of the soldiers at the fort.

It will be understood, therefore, that neither Lieutenant Decker nor Maurice Freeman felt that degree of relief which would have been theirs had they known of a certainty that they were joined by two friends, for what can be more trying than the company of those whom we distrust amid the gravest possible peril?

Having announced themselves, Maroz and Ceballos immediately joined the two horsemen, who treated them as if certain they were friends.

“Why are you here?” asked the lieutenant.

“Geronimo somewhere,” replied Maroz, speaking for himself and his companion; “come with warrior—he burn ranch—kill white folks—white folks brothers of Maroz and Ceballos—dey help brothers.”

It was in the mind of Freeman to interpose with the question as to how these two had learned of the presence of the Apache leader, when until a few hours before it was unknown to the white scouts, but it would have been unwise at this point to let the two know they were not fully trusted.

“Where are our men?” asked Decker; “I have signaled but hear nothing of them; they ought not to be many miles away.”

“Maroz and Ceballos don’t know—dey somewhere.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if they were; nothing is more likely, but I would be glad if we could find the precise spot.”

It was evident the new arrivals were disappointed at not seeing some one else with the horsemen. It was Maroz who asked:

“Where Mendez—where Cemuri?”

Lieutenant Decker thought the situation warranted a little deception on his part.

“They are watching Geronimo and the rest; they may slay the chief before they come back to us.”

“Chief bad Injun—he kill much white folks—he dog—help kill him.”

This expression would have been comforting could the hearers have believed it honest, for it would have expressed their own sentiments.

"Yes—yes," replied both, nodding their heads, for the moon having risen meanwhile, their faces were seen quite plainly.

"Well, all you have to do is to set about it. Some of the hostiles are on the other side of the stream and some are off yonder to the westward. Slip in among them and shoot all you can."

It was evident this was not the part the two wished to play.

"We stay wid brother—we help him fight."

"No, you won't; we don't want you; you can do no good here; we have sent Mendez and Cemuri away; you must go, too."

The officer was so peremptory that the Apaches did not question him further. They glanced at each other, then, without speaking, set off with their ponies on a walk toward the stream now in plain sight.

To the surprise of Decker and Freeman, they drove their horses into the water and rode directly to the other side. Near the middle the animals sank to their flanks, but at no point were they forced to swim. Emerging they continued straight away until they faded from view.

"I don't know whether it was wise to send them off in that style," remarked the lieutenant, "but I don't wish their company, even if they do claim to be friends."

CHAPTER IX.

MENDEZ, THE SCOUT.

WHEN Mendez, the White Mountain Apache, left the company of Lieutenant Decker and Maurice Freeman he fully comprehended the perilous mission he had undertaken.

He had set out to learn and if possible help check the scheme of Geronimo and his strong party, who were pushing eastward toward the more fertile and better settled Sutra Valley, with the purpose of spreading fire, destruction and death wherever the opportunity offered. What could this single scout do to affect or hinder such a purpose?

Mendez dare not enter the camp of the hostiles, under the pretense of being a friend of the raiders. Geronimo and probably all his warriors knew the one that had done them so much injury, and if Mendez really wished to cast his lot with them, his allegiance would not be accepted. His offensive work would not admit of condonation.

Lieutenant Decker spoke the truth when he said that his faithful scout would never allow himself to be taken prisoner. He always kept one chamber of his revolver filled for that emergency, which, how-

ever, would have to be desperate, before he would apply the weapon to its last use.

The theory upon which the sagacious Mendez acted was that Geronimo's plan was to sweep from his path the little company in his immediate front before carrying out his original scheme. He believed that these four were the only ones who had divined his purpose. If, therefore, they were "wiped out," he could complete his terrific raid before an adequate force could rally in his front or cut him off. The destruction of the little party, therefore, was the present design of the invaders.

If the scout was right in his surmise, Lieutenant Decker had but to despatch Mendez in the opposite direction, the same that the wounded Cemuri had followed, in order to bring speedy help. Such would have been the plan of the dusky scout, but he was a man of silence, and made no attempt to gainsay his commanding officer, no matter how much his plans might conflict with his own judgment.

It should be said that Lieutenant Decker had partly followed the course which Mendez preferred, in that he had sent Cemuri off, not only to the fort, but with instructions to find if possible the rest of the cavalrymen or scouts who were abroad, and acquaint them with the situation. Should he succeed nearly all that was possible would be accomplished, but the scout feared the severity of his comrade's wound would interfere with his usefulness.

However, dismissing all this from his mind, he set to work to carry out the delicate task before him.

The first step was to locate the invaders, who were not likely to separate at this stage of the proceedings, and here Mendez followed a theory of his own.

He believed the Apaches were not far off and that they would steal forward in the hope of outwitting and overcoming the white men. Nothing was clearer than that the scout was at great disadvantage so long as he remained on his horse. He would be not only more conspicuous than on foot, but would be stopped from using the remarkable skill with which nature and long training had equipped him. He, therefore, made a wide circuit on the sandy plain to the left, until certain he was beyond sight of any foe. Then he slipped to the ground.

His well-trained animal would not wander from the spot where he was left, and his owner was certain to find him near it, always provided no one else interfered with him. He patted his neck and allowed the intelligent creature to rub his nose against his shoulder. They understood each other.

Mendez now started to return over his own tracks, bearing slightly to the eastward, until he approached the stream. Then he paused.

The moon had not yet risen, but he knew it would soon appear, when still greater caution would be necessary in his movements. Stooping low he applied his ear to the earth, but heard nothing.

Bending low and stepping slowly—an easy thing to do on the sand—he pressed on until he reached

the edge of the narrow, smoothly flowing stream. There he stood motionless for several minutes, debating whether to cross the creek or to push his reconnoissance where he was.

Standing thus, he heard a noise which, though faint, was easily identified. It was the whinny of a horse and it came from some point on the opposite bank. Geronimo and his band were there and he determined to cross to them.

The peculiar noise was not directly opposite, but somewhat to the right, that is, nearer to where he had left his friends. Nevertheless, the scout moved further down the stream before stepping into the water. He suspected it was sufficiently shallow to be forded, but was prepared to swim if need be. He held his Winchester above his head, stepping carefully into the current, which near the middle reached above his waist. From that point the depth decreased and he finally emerged, having waded all the way. He was now on the same side with the hostiles.

If detected, his situation was tenfold more dangerous than before, and more than likely that reserve shot in his revolver would be called upon. The hostiles could easily run him down with their horses and a plunge into the stream would not save him.

In order to hide his movements he sank upon his hands and knees and began creeping toward the spot whence came the horse's neigh. A few rods were passed in this manner, when he caught sight

of that for which he was searching. A group of horsemen were dimly outlined against the sky.

So far as he could determine, there were at least a dozen. No doubt the entire band had come together and were holding a consultation as to what course they should follow.

It would have been a most desirable thing could he have approached near enough to overhear their conversation, but that was impossible. He was certain to be discovered by the animals, if not the riders, and detection meant death.

He heard the murmur of their voices, but no syllable that could be comprehended reached the crouching figure in the sand.

Suppose they should turn their horses and ride toward him! He could only make a break for the stream and strive desperately for the other shore—a feat which it may be said was impossible of accomplishment, but this was only one of the many risks which a scout has to face when operating in Arizona.

From among the group three warriors emerged on foot. They did not advance toward the solitary figure in the sand, but took a diagonal course to the stream, whose bank they followed until hidden in the gloom. Mendez did not leave or move, but speculated as to the meaning of this singular action.

While still wondering, he heard the signal which Lieutenant Decker mistook for that of a friend.

Mendez was startled, for he recognized its perfect

imitation of the call which he had used many times when scouting with the officer. He wondered by what means their enemies had obtained it, and concluded that it was one of those accidental occurrences, such as are seen when two ranchmen, widely separated, fix upon the same brand for their cattle.

The fact caused uneasiness, for the scout feared that it would mislead his friend, but nothing could be done to avert so disastrous a blunder. The officer must be left to his own shrewdness, which, as the reader has learned, proved sufficient for his protection.

Then came the rifle-shot and death cry of one of the hostiles. There could be no misinterpretation of that meaning, and the dusky scout smiled grimly as he reflected that another of the many schemes of the raiders had gone amiss.

If any doubt remained on that point, it was removed a few minutes later, when two warriors were descried returning, whereas three had left the group a short time before. The one stricken down had been allowed to lie where he fell.

It was at this juncture that Mendez became aware of a discomforting fact: the moon was rising and would soon shed a bright illumination over stream and plain. If he remained where he was, discovery was inevitable. He therefore began a cautious withdrawal from the perilous neighborhood.

He adopted a curious artifice. Instead of facing about and creeping away, he imitated the action of Geronimo's horse some hours before, when con-

fronting Lieutenant Decker. He backed toward the stream, a course which enabled him to keep an eye on his enemies in front.

He had passed half the distance, and was cautiously retrograding, when he experienced a shock. One of the mounted Apaches left the group and rode toward him !

Mendez ceased his motion on the instant and grasped his Winchester so as to aim and fire in a twinkling. His purpose was, if discovered, to shoot the buck from his pony, dash forward and capture his horse, or if that was not feasible, make a break to the stream and run for his own animal.

One of these desperate attempts assuredly would have followed had the horseman kept the course upon which he started, but he had gone only a little way when he made an abrupt change and approached the bank at a point almost as far removed from the scout as was the band of raiders.

This was a vast relief, and all fear would have departed but for the moon which was rapidly climbing the sky and shedding an effulgence that made it like daylight itself. Had the scout risen to his feet he would have been detected at once. He must continue prone and reach the stream in that posture or not reach it at all.

But it looked as if that solitary horseman was doomed to be his death after all ; for, instead of crossing the creek or remaining where he was, he turned once more, and, as before, headed toward Mendez, who, believing the critical moment had come, braced himself for the struggle.

CHAPTER X.

THE EAVESDROPPER.

It would be hard to explain the course of the Apache horseman. It looked at first as if he had been aware of the presence of the scout for some, and was trifling with him, as a cat sometimes toys with a mouse before crunching it in her jaws, but the peculiar circumstances forbids this explanation.

Instead of riding directly over the prostrate figure, the buck once more checked his animal, while several rods distant. Mendez, who was watching him intently, then perceived that instead of looking in front of his pony, he was gazing toward the further shore of the stream, as if interested there. Possibly he had seen or heard something which he did not understand.

The few seconds' grace thus granted were improved by the imperiled scout. Gently swaying his body, limbs and hands, he groveled and burrowed silently into the sand, until, with the exception of his head, he was covered. The fine particles reached even to his shoulders. Stretched thus, perfectly motionless, an enemy might have passed within arm's length without observing him.

The dread of Mendez was not that the rider would see him, nor indeed that the horse would observe him, but that the keen scent of the animal would bring the revelation. There are many situations—and this was one of them—in which the nose of a horse is more to be feared than the sagacity of his rider.

Whatever the Apache was studying did not engage his attention long. He spoke to his pony, which turned to one side and walked toward the waiting group.

In doing this he approached still closer to the figure almost wholly hidden in the sand. It is not probable that he saw it, but his keen sense of smell apprised him that some man or animal was near. He swerved suddenly to one side with a snort, and skillful as was his rider, the movement was so abrupt that he came within a hair of being unseated. He spoke angrily to his animal, striking his heels so sharply against his ribs that he galloped the few remaining steps to the main company.

No narrower escape than that of Mendez can be conceived. With all his acumen he hardly understood why the buck failed to make an investigation. Had he done so, discovery was absolutely certain. It must have been that he reasoned that no such cause as the real one could exist, so close to the other horseman, and such belief on his part was one of the most reasonable things in the world.

But be all this as it may, it was high time that the scout effected a change of base. Wonderful as

was the good fortune that had attended him thus far, it could not continue indefinitely: disaster impended.

It was not far to the stream which he was so anxious to reach, and yet, despite the peril involved in remaining where he was, he decided it was not so dangerous as to try to leave the spot while Geronimo and his men were so near. He was now effectually hidden in the sand, for he drew more of the particles about his head until little more than his hair and eyes was visible.

The keen vision of the hostiles was likely to be drawn to the spot if he resumed his backward movement toward the water. It will be remembered, too, that the banks of the stream were so low and flat that they could give no concealment, and the agitation that must follow his entrance into the shallow creek was certain to catch the notice of his enemies.

And so, on the whole, he did the best thing possible, risky as it must be, by staying where he was.

It seemed as if the whole gamut of fear was to be run by Mendez, who found himself in such peculiar danger. The horsemen made a shift of position which brought them several yards nearer the prostrate figure, who would have been glad to sink himself several feet under the ground had it been possible.

But this supreme trial of his nerves brought its consolation, for he was now able to hear and understand nearly everything said by his enemies—an

achievement which otherwise would have been among the impossibilities.

A significant fact, immediately preceding this eavesdropper episode, was the arrival of Maroz and Ceballos, who, as will be remembered, had been sent away by Lieutenant Decker. From his curious hiding-place Mendez recognized both, as they rode up in the bright moonlight and joined the group as if they were friends who expected their coming.

It will be more intelligible if we give a liberal interpretation of the conversation between Geronimo and the two arrivals.

“I am glad to look upon the face of my brothers,” said the leader, by way of greeting; “I knew you would hasten to join us.”

“We came as soon as we could; but the soldiers watch us closely; they distrust us, though we have done all we could to make them think us friends.”

To this remark by Maroz, Ceballos added:

“We are eager to give the great Geronimo all the help we can.”

“Where are the soldiers?” was the pertinent query of the chief.

“We are not sure; they were a few miles to the east, near the Sutra Valley.”

“Do they know of our coming?”

“They cannot, but others do.”

“Who are the others?”

“Lieutenant Decker, the man Freeman with him, and Mendez and Cemuri, the traitors.”

“Who are they?”

“The white men are on the other side of the stream ; they killed one of your warriors, as I have learned ; Mendez and Cemuri have left them to watch the movements of yourself and warriors.”

“I know the renegades are with the two white men ; I would give much could I lay hands on them, but we fear them not ; it is the horsemen whom we need to look for, for they are more numerous than we.”

“If we move quickly we may strike and get away before the soldiers know where we are,” was the wise suggestion of Maroz.

“That we would do if we could learn where the soldiers are ; we must first know that.”

In this remark, the Apache leader revealed the key of the whole situation. He was among the most cunning of his people, and, while at times, he assumed risks that were of the most reckless character, it was not his rule to do so when they could well be avoided. He knew that the alarm of his approach had spread, through some means, despite his swiftness of movement. The American cavalry were scouting through the country for him, and he had had too many brushes with those daring troopers to seek another conflict, even if he did not always run away from a fight.

The remark quoted raised the interesting question in the mind of the eavesdropper hidden in the sand, whether, if Geronimo became convinced that the course to the ranches to the eastward was well guarded, he would not turn back and postpone his raid to a more propitious season.

This was the occasion when Maroz and Ceballos, had they been the friends of the whites that they pretended to be, might have done inestimable service by making the dreaded scourge believe that such danger threatened him. Instead of taking this course, however, the miscreants urged him to hasten the blow he was meditating.

“If you stay here too long,” continued Maroz, “the soldiers will know of a certainty that you are coming.”

“But they will not know where we mean to go.”

“Mendez and Cemuri will warn them,” suggested Maroz, who, it will be remembered, knew nothing of the wounding of Cemuri.

“They shall not live to see the sun rise!” exclaimed Geronimo, with his old-time fierceness; “we shall slay them both; the white men with them shall be killed; then we will turn to the southward, strike our blow and be gone before the soldiers can learn where we are.”

It will be conceded that Mendez was acquiring a good deal of interesting information. The question was whether he would be able to turn it to account since his own position was more perilous than that of any one else.

“Let Maroz and Ceballos go back to the white men; let them be vigilant, and when the chance comes kill them both!”

“That is what we meant to do,” was the prompt avowal of Ceballos, but they sent “us away before we had the chance; they told us to go to you, and

to fight against you ; if we go back they will believe we are your friends and they will slay us."

There was sense in this statement of the situation, and the great Apache leader could not fail to see it. If the two should return to Lieutenant Decker, after being sent away, it could not fail to throw them under suspicion, and more than likely their lives would pay the forfeit.

But it was necessary that some one should get nearer the two than any of the Apaches had succeeded in doing, or else no further attention was to be given to the little party, who kept so persistently in the path of the raiders, or Geronimo must postpone his raid, as has been stated, to a more convenient season.

The chieftain decided upon the first expedient. He spoke to one of his most trusted scouts and directed him to cross the stream, and by some means slay the obstructing white men. This was an elastic order, permitting, as it did, the widest latitude as to the means employed ; but it was all Geronimo could do, for nothing would have been more idle than for him to give minute instructions, when he could have no possible knowledge of the complications that would arise.

He might have called on any member of his band and the response would have been as prompt as in the case of the veteran scout who now essayed a task as dangerous as it was difficult.

CHAPTER XI.

CAVARHO AND MENDEZ.

THE scout selected by Geronimo showed his wisdom by dismounting and setting out on foot to perform his delicate mission. Like Mendez, he did not mean to handicap himself with the presence of his horse.

In going to the stream he almost stepped upon the White Mountain Apache, who, fortunately for him, had about buried himself in the sand, but with all his astonishing skill, the hostile saw not the object which could not have escaped his vision had he once looked down to the earth, instead of keeping his eyes fixed on the silently flowing stream and the clearly defined bank beyond.

Mendez had certainly gone through his share of trying danger. He had learned all that it was necessary to know and much more than he expected to learn, and his one desire now was to get back to his friends. A grim warrior had started to seek their lives; and, knowing his own race as he did, Mendez feared the issue.

The moon had climbed so high in the heavens and its light was so powerful that the scout not only dared not approach the creek, but was afraid to

change his position or fling off any part of the blanket of sand that had served so well to conceal him. He must stay where he was until Geronimo and his band moved away.

Luckily for the scout his suspense was soon relieved. Suddenly the horsemen were in motion, and, approaching the stream, followed its bank until out of sight to the eastward.

This was the chance for which Mendez was waiting with a feeling akin to impatience. Like a sleeper roused from slumber, he shook himself free from the rattling particles, and, rising to his feet, skurried to the water's edge, at the point where he had emerged. A quick glance showed no one in sight, and stepping into the current he made his way to the other shore without incident.

His object now was to rejoin his friends as soon as he could, impart the important tidings he had gained, and help them guard against the treacherous attempt that was sure to be made against their lives.

Lieutenant Decker had told him where to seek himself and Freeman. They might have shifted their position, but not far. He recalled the point whence the fatal shot had been fired into the group of three Apaches, and turned his footsteps thither.

It was destined to be a night of adventure to the daring scout, for while he was making his way along shore, two horsemen suddenly loomed to view. They were on the other side of the stream, however, and he might have taken them for his friends

had the light been less powerful. As it was, the first glance showed them to be hostiles.

It will be understood that in one respect Mendez held an immense advantage over them, for he knew they were enemies, while they took him for a friend —a natural mistake, since he belonged to their own race, and his attire was similar to that of many of the tribe.

Another incident contributed to the blunder: their own scout had crossed but a few minutes before. He was on foot, and in height and general appearance resembled Mendez, while the moonlight was just faint enough to exclude a close scrutiny.

The distance between the two was so slight that it was easy to understand each other by using an ordinary conversational tone.

“Cavarho,” said one of the horsemen, using the name of the supposed scout, “why do you seek the white men by the side of the stream?”

“Was it not from this side that they slew one of our bravest men?” asked Mendez in turn.

“True, but not from that spot.”

“It is further up the bank and I am making my way there.”

“But in the strong light of the moon they will see you, Cavarho.”

“No sooner than they will see you on your horses.”

“We shall watch for them.”

“And I will do the same.”

“Cavarho is our best scout,” was the complemen-

tary remark of the horseman who had done the talking for himself and companion.

And as if nothing more remained to be said, the two wheeled their ponies and rode off, taking a course that led away from the stream, as if in respect to the warning their supposed friend had given.

Mendez silently brought his rifle to his shoulder. He could not have asked a better target and he was certain of bringing down one if not both of them. He made his aim true and then—lowered his weapon without firing.

It is not often that an Apache is inspired by anything of a chivalrous nature, but it was so in this instance. Had the horsemen been facing him, probably Mendez would have discharged his Winchester, but with their backs toward him, and without a suspicion of their danger, even his soul rebelled. He allowed them to ride beyond range, and never did they know how close they trod the verge of death.

The scout resumed his guarded advance along the stream and concluded that he was in the neighborhood of his friends. He halted and looked around, but saw nothing of them. As far as the eye could reach, which in the clear atmosphere was further than would be supposed, the white sand stretched, with the winding stream agleam in the moonlight.

Mendez was on the point of emitting the signal, when once more the whinny of a horse sounded on the still night air. It startled him more than any

sound he had heard that night, for it was from his own pony. Its direction left no doubt of that.

The conviction flashed upon him that the hostile who had preceded him in crossing the stream had come upon his horse and was probably trying to make off with him. The whole nature of Mendez flamed up at the outrage. He forgot everything for the moment and set out to punish the criminal and prevent the success of his daring purpose.

But intense as was his anger, the scout did not forget the situation. He was about to confront one of the most daring and skillful of his own race, who was eager to make him bite the dust.

The suspicion of Mendez was correct. Cavarho, after crossing the stream, had gone inland and away from the shore, instead of turning to the left, which would have taken him near the spot where Lieutenant Decker and Maurice Freeman were awaiting the return of Mendez and the development of events. This course led him almost in a straight line to where the pony of the friendly scout was also awaiting the coming of his master.

Cavarho showed his quickness of perception by discovering the animal before the latter detected him. The presence of the pony in this lonely place suggested the proximity of his master, and the scout did considerable maneuvering before venturing nearer. A complete circuit of the animal, however, showed that nothing of that nature was to be feared. Probably Cavarho suspected the true state of the case, though of course nothing can be said with

certainty on that point. At any rate, having learned that no person beside himself was in the immediate vicinity, he walked toward the animal with the intention of making a prisoner of him.

Before this, the horse had perceived him and stood with head erect, studying the figure as it drew near. His intelligence quickly told him it was not his master, but a number of soothing expressions quieted his fears, and he suffered the stranger to come quite close before taking the alarm.

Cavarho advanced with a slow and almost imperceptible movement, murmuring gently in his own tongue, while the beast hesitated whether to permit more familiarity or to bound away.

He decided upon the latter, but deferred the matter just a second too long. In the act of wheeling, the Apache made a catlike leap and grasped his forelock, holding him with a grip which could not be shaken off. The pony uttered an angry whinny and struggled to free himself, but, unable to do so, quickly gave up the effort.

It was rarely that Mendez used a saddle. He generally preferred to ride bareback, with a rope or a strap for a halter, his voice being generally sufficient for all directions. The fact that he had no bridle or saddle must have given Cavarho an inkling of the truth and told him that the horse belonged either to Mendez or Cemuri. Be that as it may, he flung himself upon his back and became for the moment master of the situation.

It was at this juncture that a faint, peculiar cry

struck the ear of the horse, which recognized it as the call of his master. Instantly he dashed in the direction whence it came. A dozen Cavarhos would not have been sufficient to restrain or turn the steed aside from his purpose.

But the acumen of the strange rider told him the meaning of all this, and he leaped to the ground in a twinkling. As he did so, he saw the figure of the enraged Mendez bearing down upon him.

There was little time for preparation and none for the peculiar strategy in which both were experts. Each was armed with a Winchester, and almost simultaneously they were brought to a level.

Mendez was quick enough to anticipate Cavarho.

The pleased horse, happy to recognize his own master, rubbed his nose against his cheek, while Mendez petted and uttered many an endearing expression. It would have been a sore grief to the scout to lose his precious steed, that had been his faithful companion in many a perilous experience.

Mendez was on his back the next instant, and keeping in mind the points of the compass, he readily guided him toward the spot where he expected to find his friends.

Nor was he disappointed. Lieutenant Decker and Captain Freeman were on the alert, and, when the familiar whistle of the scout pierced the still air, there was so little doubt in the mind of the young officer that he answered it without hesitation.

A few minutes later, Mendez emerged from the gloom, and, riding forward a brief space, the two saluted the other.

CHAPTER XII.

A CALL AND A REPLY.

MENDEZ brought momentous tidings indeed. Addicted as he was to silence and with no disposition to talk, he had to do considerable of it now. His imperfect knowledge of English made it necessary for his friends to ask many questions, but it did not take them long to learn all that he had gathered and which has been told in its proper place to the reader.

“Captain,” said the lieutenant, “you have been uneasy all along because I insisted upon our staying here. I could see that you were on the point of making a break for your home ; are you sorry now that you did not ?”

“No ; I will admit that I served my family as well and perhaps better by staying here, but it was hard to believe so at the time.”

“It is rather curious, and I was doubtful myself more than once.”

“Geronimo has the reputation of being a shrewd leader, but I can’t see wherein he shows it by staying in this part of the country, when he could make a dash into the Sutra Valley and be far on his return before we knew anything about it.”

“It is not to be supposed that he holds us in any fear, but it is the other scouts that he knows are somewhere in the neighborhood. He doesn’t wish to move until he learns where they are.”

“But he has done so many times before.”

“Some time when we hold him a prisoner (if we can hold him long enough), we’ll ask him for an explanation. It’s sufficient for us to know that we have served our friends well by keeping him in check. Every hour counts, too, in our favor. He has lost two of his best men and we are without a scratch.”

“True, for the present,” remarked Freeman, looking around in the moonlight, as if he expected to discover some of their foes trying to steal upon them.

“There’s one beauty of the situation which I don’t think you appreciate, captain.”

“What’s that?”

“Geronimo sent out his best scouts to shoot us, or at least to locate us and make it easy for the others to do the job. The chief will wait a long time before he begins to suspect what has befallen that same scout.”

“That was a marvelous exploit of Mendez,” said Freeman warmly; “I never saw a man who was his superior.”

“He has no superior.”

The subject of these compliments sat motionless on his horse, his black eyes glancing in every direction, and on the alert as he always was. He heard

and understood every word, but nothing in his manner showed it.

“And yet to my mind his disposal of the scout was not the equal of his exploit in remaining in hiding so near the band that he overheard every word said by Geronimo and his men; that was a wonderful thing.”

“It was indeed. He secured just the news we needed and which gives us a perfect knowledge of the old fellow’s plans.”

“How long do you think he will await the return of his scout?”

Instead of replying, the lieutenant turned the question over to Mendez. Perhaps the latter was impatient with the continued complimentary allusions to himself, for without looking at either of the men, he answered :

“Dunno.”

“Nor does any one else. If I were to give a guess, however, I should say two hours at least, and perhaps longer. Let me see.”

The officer took out his watch, the face of which could be plainly seen in the bright light.

“It is exactly ten o’clock. If I am right in my surmise, he will make no move before midnight.”

“Ain’t right—you wrong,” interjected Mendez, to the amusement of his companions.

“Well, why didn’t you say so before? Now, Mendez, give *your* guess.”

“Wait one—two—three hours.”

“That’s better, for it takes us beyond midnight.

I shouldn't wonder, if Geronimo waits that long, that he will not conclude it best to give up his raid."

This was thrown out as a feeler, and both, with a smile, awaited the comment of Mendez, but he made none. He seemed to think he had imparted sufficient information.

"While we are speculating," continued the lieutenant, "it seems to me that when one o'clock arrives, the chief will send some other scout, or perhaps two or three of them, to investigate—all of which will consume time, so that the night will be well gone before he makes a move. Am I right, Mendez?"

"Dunno."

The lieutenant was in high spirits over their success thus far and disposed to be facetious at the expense of their grim companion.

"You made the same remark before, as preliminary to a definite expression of your views; may I hope that it will be the same in this instance?"

Perhaps the wording of this inquiry lifted it above the comprehension of the Apache, for, withdrawing his scrutiny of their surroundings for a minute, he looked at the officer, and, in his contempt for his badinage, forgot the respect due his rank.

"Huh! talk like big fool!"

This was too much for Freeman, who threw back his head and laughed heartily, taking care that his mirth should be as silent as possible. Mendez now stared at him, and said with more scorn if possible than before:

“Huh! big fool!”

And then it was the lieutenant’s turn, who almost fell from his saddle with merriment. The scout surveyed the two alternately. He would have been relieved to give expression to his feelings, but made no attempt, possibly because he could not do them justice. Instead, he turned his attention to their surroundings, peering here, there and everywhere with that birdlike restlessness which he always showed when in a situation resembling the present.

The three horses were hungry, for none of them had eaten anything since early in the day, but there was no help for it. Fodder could not be obtained in that section, where, as has been shown, the sandy soil yielded comparatively nothing. They would do well enough while water was to be had, even if compelled to go twenty-fours longer without nourishment. The ponies ridden by the raiding Apaches often suffered for a longer period, and, during many of the hard rides in the frightful summer months, they could not obtain a mouthful of water for long hours, while the raiders themselves underwent hardships which few civilized people can stand.

Lieutenant Decker had a portion of his frugal rations still in reserve, but since they had eaten not long before, it was decided to keep the food until morning.

A long, trying wait was before them, and he and Freeman dismounted, the officer striking a match, with which he lit a cigar, first giving one to Freeman, who found much solace in smoking it.

“I have been greatly depressed,” remarked the latter, “since I learned of this impending raid until now. My thoughts were with my wife and little ones, and the relief is now so great to know that they are not only safe, but that the danger is growing less with every hour that I am in buoyant spirits.”

“The expression of Mendez’s opinion then does not disturb you?”

“No; since you share with me his estimation.”

“His views in my case were made with less emphasis.”

“But he was equally in earnest; if my title of captain, which you are so fond of giving me, was as real as your own, I suspect he would have exchanged the compliments.”

“Possibly, but I forgive him in view of what he has accomplished for the good of the cause.”

“Wait—me come back.”

The men suspected the scout of wishing to place himself beyond range of their observations, for he now rode his horse toward the stream, on the other side of which it was believed the hostiles were still awaiting events.

“I hope he is not offended,” remarked Freeman, when their friend was beyond earshot.

“Offended! no; he doesn’t like to be complimented, in which respect he differs from most folks. I suspect we distract his vigilance and he wishes to get away by himself, where he can do his duty without interference.”

“And yet he apprehends no molestation from the hostiles for several hours”

“But lacks the guarantee that we will be let alone even for a fraction of that time. He is one of those wise fellows who take no chances. I wonder,” added the lieutenant, suddenly shifting the conversation, “how Cemuri made out.”

“I see no reason to doubt his speedy arrival at the fort, but it is too soon to expect help from there.”

“I am hopeful that he came across some of the soldiers before going that far.”

“He may have met Maroz and Ceballos.”

“It is possible, but he was as distrustful of them as we, and would have avoided them.”

“He was well mounted, but those two scamps are treacherous. They have proved it to the satisfaction of Mendez, whose testimony ought to hang them.”

“It ought to, but it won’t. He overheard enough to show their disloyalty, but he did not see them commit any overt act, and they would plead that they were compelled to pretend a friendship to the hostiles to save their lives.”

“It was fortunate that you sent them off so promptly, for as long as they were in our company there is no saying what evil they would work. Lieutenant, why not repeat the signal you made some time ago?”

“The suggestion is a good one. If it doesn’t bring the boys it may add to Geronimo’s uneasiness.”

Again pointing his Winchester skyward, the young officer discharged it as before—two shots in quick succession, followed by a third at a longer interval.

And this time there was a reply !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TROOPERS.

CEMURI, the wounded scout, did his duty well. Convinced that Lieutenant Decker did the right thing in ordering him to return to Fort Reno, to have his hurt looked after, he was as eager as ever to befriend the gallant young officer and his companions, thus deprived of his services.

The White Mountain Apache waited but a short time after the disappearance of Maroz and Ceballos, when he climbed into the saddle and headed his pony for the fort. His suffering was great, but his iron will mastered the weakness of his body, for which he showed his contempt by striking his animal into a gallop, which served to increase his pain.

A mile away he came directly upon six cavalry-men who were out on a scout. Among them were Armon Peyser, Budge Colgate and Jack Redfield, who had campaigned for years in New Mexico and Arizona and knew all there was to know of the cunning and ferocity of Geronimo, Natchez and their fierce followers.

Cemuri quickly told his story. He was able to locate the raiders and direct the party to the spot where the three scouts were doing all they could to

hold them in check. Despite the pluck of the friendly Apache, he could not hide his suffering, and Peyser, in his sympathy, offered to send one of his men with him to the post.

This proposition, made with the best of intentions, was almost an insult to Cemuri. He refused it point-blank, and, to prevent its repetition, galloped away without so much as a farewell. None knew better than he that he could not receive aid too soon, but he would accept no guidance or assistance from these friends.

“That’s good news of his,” said Peyser, as he and his companions sat grouped together in the moonlight, “for it means a fight.”

“But Geronimo has some twenty of his bucks with him,” reminded Budge Colgate, “and to put matters in a good shape, we ought to have more of the boys with us.”

“We’ll do it if we can, but, if they can’t be found in time, we won’t be cheated out of our fun.”

“I don’t think Jennings and the rest are far off,” suggested Jack Redfield, who now made the signal used by Lieutenant Decker, who was too far off to hear the reports.

To their delight, the hail was instantly answered from a point so near at hand that the three instinctively turned their eyes to the south whence it came.

A few minutes later, a ringing “Halloo!” sounded through the stillness and a round dozen horsemen loomed to view, coming at a swinging pace. In a

twinkling, as may be said, eighteen well-mounted and armed United States troopers gathered in the middle of the sandy plain. Armon Peyser, as the oldest campaigner and by virtue of his office as sergeant, was leader, though when a junction should be effected with Freeman and Decker, the lieutenant of course would assume command.

A hurried consultation followed. It was nearly five miles to the bend of the stream, where Cemuri had left his friends, and Peyser began describing the place, as well as he could, when Budge Colgate interrupted him.

“I know the spot! We can ride there in a bee line; lead on sergeant.”

And away they went, hardly drawing rein until within a fourth of a mile of the stream. Knowing they were near it, the party slackened their pace and were cautiously advancing, with Colgate at the head, when the signal of Lieutenant Decker reached them.

“Good!” exclaimed the scout; “I knew it wasn’t far off.”

As has been shown, the hail was promptly answered and a second junction took place, with the result that a round twenty horsemen were brought together, all eager for a brush with the hostiles. Mendez had not yet returned from his reconnoissance upon which he ventured some time before. He was not so far off, however, that he did not know of the arrival of the reinforcements, and he was but a few minutes behind them in reaching the spot.

Being ready for the serious business now in hand, the all-important requisite was to know the situation of the foe whom they meant to strike. Mendez had no information to give on that point, for when he left his two friends he went only a short way. His purpose was not so much to spy out the hostiles as to prevent their spying out the two whites and stealing a march upon them.

Lieutenant Decker was as indisposed as any of his companions to remain idle until the rising of the sun. Accordingly the three best scouts, including Mendez, were sent out to locate the raiders, if possible, with a view of attacking them at the earliest moment. In their absence, the troopers dismounted and lolled about in the sand, some snatching a little sleep, others smoking and talking in low tones, while the sentinels, as a matter of course, were placed at the proper points to guard against surprise.

Martin, one of the white scouts, went up the stream, Potter, another, took the opposite course, while Mendez rode his pony to the other side. The other two were also mounted, for it will be understood that their duty differed from that of the Apache scout, when he first went out. It was then an object with him to steal as close as he could to the raiders, with a view of learning their purposes, and it has been shown how well he did his duty.

In the present instance, however, it was only necessary to find out where the main body of hostiles were. The instant that became known, the one

making the discovery would hasten back with the information. If well mounted, he could do this much more successfully than if on foot.

It was not to be supposed that the hostiles would be on the alert against such an enterprise, and the scouts undertaking it were hopeful of making their discovery and getting back within an hour from the time of their going forth.

The most dangerous proceeding, as it seemed, was that of Mendez in crossing the stream, for the presumption was that the enemies were on the other side. If he should be seen, as was quite likely, when he located the raiders he would have to make a desperate ride for life. It would not do to dash into the stream, for his progress would be so checked that he would become the best of targets for his enemies.

Recalling where he had last seen Geronimo and his bucks, Mendez rode in that direction. He knew he would not find them there, for his last glimpse showed them leaving the spot, but he made his way thither without detecting the first sign of them.

In the strong moonlight, the scout could readily see the footprints of the horses, without leaning over from the back of his own steed. The trail led up the stream, keeping quite near it, and then, to the surprise of the scout, it circled to the left and away from the water.

He could not fathom the meaning of this, nor indeed did he try to do so, for the special necessity did not exist, but he kept to it, his horse advancing

slowly, while the rider peered into the gloom on every hand. The situation became more critical every moment.

The trail showed that the raiders were keeping well together and their animals were walking. Here and there diverging hoofprints indicated that one or more of the horsemen had drawn off from the main body, or else two separate trails crossed each other.

The circle swept inward upon the plain, and by and by turned backward, that is to the west. To the astonishment of Mendez, it began approaching the stream, as if the hostiles meant to recross it. If this were the fact, Potter, who had gone down the bank of the creek would probably be the first to discover the Apaches.

The probability of this issue caused the dusky scout uneasiness, for the raiders being on the same side with the troopers were likely to locate them before being observed, thus securing a perilous advantage, to say nothing of the great danger in which Potter would be placed, despite his skill and experience.

Mendez was approaching the stream, whose smooth surface gleamed in the moonlight, when his steed quietly stopped. He made no sound, but pricked his ears.

This was enough, for his owner knew what it meant. An enemy was near. Less than a minute was sufficient to place him. He was directly ahead, and like Mendez was mounted, being probably one

of the hostile scouts that had been sent to the rear to watch for just such attempts as were now making against them.

The situation assumed the interesting phase of two highly trained scouts maneuvering against each other. Wonderful as was the skill of Mendez, it did not surpass that of his enemy, whose horse was also the equal of the one ridden by the other.

The pony of the scout had shown astonishing quickness in detecting the presence of the other equine, but at precisely the same moment the latter warned his rider of the approach of the other. Both halted and for a minute or more remained motionless. Then Mendez made the curious discovery that his foe was gradually fading from sight.

There was no mystery in this vanishment, however, which was in accord with natural laws. The hostile had whirled his animal around with a quickness which could not be noted at that distance, and began walking him toward the stream, closely watching at the same time the movements of the foe thus thrown to the rear.

Instead of following, Mendez waited until the other had passed out of his field of vision. Then he turned abruptly to the left and rode to the edge of the stream. There he and his animal again became stationary.

The rider was listening and looking. The eyes told him nothing, but a faint splashing noise, several times repeated, came to him. He interpreted it as

meaning that the horseman whom he had seen was crossing the creek.

This of itself was of little importance, but Mendez accepted it as evidence that the whole band had done the same thing some time before, and the horseman was now on his way to rejoin them. So convinced indeed was Mendez on this point that he guided his animal carefully into the water and forded the stream, without searching out the place where Geronimo and his hostiles had also crossed.

CHAPTER XIV.

WAITING FOR DAYLIGHT.

HAVING emerged from the stream, Mendez rode down the bank, toward the ridge, where the hostiles had been first seen during the day. It will be remembered that he had now entered upon the bailiwick of Potter, the scout, who was engaged upon the same errand.

As before, the friendly Apache placed his main reliance upon his pony, who knew as well as his rider the delicate duty in hand.

The animal walked slowly, his hoofs sinking to the fetlocks in the soft sand, while the senses of both were at the highest point. To the surprise of Mendez he passed a full half mile without observing the slightest sign of his enemies. Then, as before, his animal stopped of his own accord.

The keenest scrutiny of the front and on every hand failed to show the cause of the abrupt stoppage of the horse, but he must have had a cause, for, as may be said, his action was controlled by an instinct approaching reason.

Several minutes passed without the appearance of anything to explain the situation, and then Mendez gently pressed one heel against the ribs of the pony,

who resumed his walk, but stopped again after taking a dozen steps.

Some of the Apache horses must have been less trained than they should have been, for not one but two or three neighed upon discovering another of their species in their vicinity.

It was all sufficient; Mendez had located the band and he now turned his animal's head in the other direction to report to Lieutenant Decker. At that moment several Apache horsemen burst into sight, dashing at full speed toward the scout, who, with a word sent his own animal flying toward camp.

The race was short and furious. Mendez was the better mounted and rapidly pulled away from his pursuers, who sent several bullets whistling after him and then drew off from the pursuit.

When convinced that the chase was over, Mendez checked his speed and turned slightly to the right, so as to draw away from the stream, which had been followed most of the time. He was not far from camp and haste was not necessary.

And again his horse made a discovery. He did not stop but slackened his pace, with ears erect and head turned to the right, toward the open plain.

The keen vision of the rider quickly saw the cause. A dark object was discerned on the sand, but was so indistinct that its nature could not be learned without a nearer approach.

The first thought was that it might be one of the hostiles, trying to steal upon the whites in this characteristic fashion. Mendez held his rifle ready

to fire and gently urged his horse to advance. He seemed loath to obey, but did so, once more halting, after advancing a few paces.

That which the scout saw was the figure of a man prone and motionless in the sand. Studying him for some time, no change of position could be perceived. The pony was urged more sternly than before. As if aware that it was useless to disregard his master's command, he snorted and then walked straight to the figure, not stepping until his owner checked him within twenty feet.

The form on the ground was that of Potter, the scout. He was lying on his face and did not move a muscle. There was good reason for this as was shown by the feather-tipped point of an arrow which projected from between his shoulders.

Mendez slipped from his steed and stooping over rolled the body on its back. The scout had been dead for some time, killed by an arrow driven with such terrific force into his back that the tip showed in front. While he was stealing upon his enemies he must have been discovered by one of them, without the knowledge of the scout. Although the Apaches are experts in the use of firearms, they are equally skillful in handling the bow and arrow, which, because of their noiselessness, sometimes serve their cruel purposes better than the more common weapon. They have often slain a white man within a few rods of his friends, without awaking suspicion, the twang of the bowstring being scarcely louder than a sudden puff of air.

With all his experience in scouting against those people, the white man had met his death at last through their superior cunning.

Mendez vaulted upon the back of his pony and a few minutes later rejoined his friends. The horse of Potter had arrived some time before, so that his companions were prepared for the news. Almost at the same moment, Martin came in with word that he had been unable to learn anything, which, in view of the fate of his comrade, was perhaps a fortunate thing for him.

One fact was evident: the Apaches had been as quick to detect the presence of the troopers as the latter were to discover them. None of the sentinels had observed any of the hostiles prowling in the neighborhood, but there could be no doubt that one or more of them had crept nigh enough to learn the truth.

“They are a half mile or so away,” remarked Lieutenant Decker to the leading scouts, whom he was always glad to consult; “and what is best to do?”

“If you will allow me,” remarked Freeman, “we can do nothing but wait for daylight, for the reason that it is impossible now to surprise them.”

“That is sensible,” commented Peyser, “they will be looking for us, and, if we make an attack in the moonlight, they will have the advantage.”

The lieutenant examined his watch. It was considerably past midnight. He was ready to lead a charge against the raiders, but it would have been

unwise in view of what was already known. He assented to wait until sunrise.

"But it is well to make a change of base," he said; "the Apaches, knowing we are here, will try to gain a shot at us."

Inasmuch as there was little choice of location, the troopers took the singular course of riding out on the plain to the spot where the body of Potter, the scout, lay stretched in the sand. They could not abandon it, the intention being to take it back to the fort and give it Christian burial.

Men engaged upon such arduous work as the troopers snatch sleep and rest as the opportunity offers. The night was cool enough to make their blankets comfortable, and they were spread on the sand, while the hardy owners stretched out upon them, sinking almost immediately into deep, restful slumber. All the horses had been ridden hard and the rest was grateful to them, even though they suffered for food. Thus the scene was a curious one. With the exception of three sentinels, placed at some distance from camp, the entire company were unconscious.

But it need not be said that they slept on their arms, ready to leap to their feet and fight to the death at the first alarm. They had done it many a time before and always held themselves ready to do it again.

The sentinel to the north and the one to the south saw nothing to cause the slightest misgiving. They were extremely vigilant, for each realized that his

own life, as well as the lives of his comrades might be sacrificed by a moment's forgetfulness. If an Apache was permitted to steal nigh enough to launch his deadly arrow, he would thus open the way for a swift and deadly charge by his comrades.

Three times the guard placed between the camp and stream was on the point of firing his gun, but checked himself until his suspicion should become certainty. A faint ripple of water drew his attention to the creek, and he dimly saw a small dark object floating on the water. At first it appeared to be drifting with the current, but he fancied it was gradually working to the shore nearer to him.

“I believe it is the head of one of them,” was his thought; “as soon as he comes nigh enough I’ll let drive.”

But after floating down stream a considerable way, it disappeared. The sentinel was an intelligent and alert fellow, who did not allow his scrutiny to be diverted more than a moment from any point of the compass within his field of vision. He knew that one of the favorite tricks of the Apaches was to draw the attention of their enemies to some point while the real danger approached from the other.

A half hour later the soldier on duty saw precisely the same thing repeated. A small round object drifted with the current, but, so far as he could determine, it was working toward the further bank; but, as in the former case, it remained in the water until it passed from sight.

“I think I could hit it from here,” reflected the sentinel, “but it may be a piece of wood or something like that, and the boys need their rest so much that it’s a pity to wake them without good cause—well, I’ll be hanged !”

It was not in the water this time, but close to it that the suspicious object now showed itself. It looked as if the first one having effected a landing at a point down stream was stealing up again, with a view of approaching camp. To do this, it kept on the very margin of the current, where the slight depression of the sandy bank afforded a trifling protection, though not enough wholly to conceal it.

“It’s one of them, dead sure,” muttered the trooper, making ready to give him a proper reception; “he can’t do any mischief until he comes nearer, and if I don’t let the moonlight shine through his noddle it will be because I’ve forgotten how to fire a gun.”

But after all the chance for a test of his marksmanship was denied the man who was so anxious to pick off the miscreant. While carefully watching and waiting until he could make his aim sure, the object, whatever it was, vanished, nor did it appear again.

The soldier could not know of a certainty the explanation of this curious occurrence and asked the opinion of Mendez the following morning. That sagacious scout listened attentively to the story and said in his abrupt way :

“Him ‘Pache.”

But the few hours remaining of night passed without further alarm, and men and animals secured a much needed and refreshing rest. Dawn came at last and all felt that the day was to prove a decisive one.

CHAPTER XV.

AN INTERRUPTED FLIGHT.

THE troopers wasted no time. No coffee was boiled, for the means of kindling a fire was not at command. He who has been on a laborious march knows the meaning of such a deprivation. Rations were hastily eaten and the horses drank from the stream at hand and continued their fasting.

The body of the fallen scout was secured on the back of his steed, which accompanied the scouting party when it headed westward. The time for serious work had come.

The Apaches could not ambush this daring band of campaigners, riding hard through the open country, with their eyes alert for every form of danger.

With no deviation the cavalrymen galloped to the spot where Mendez had located their enemies the previous night, but long before reaching the place it was seen that the raiders were gone.

But whither? That was the question on every tongue.

“I have a misgiving,” said Maurice Freeman to Lieutenant Decker, “that when Geronimo learned we were here, he made a detour and has passed over into the valley after all.”

"I sympathize with you, captain, for you cannot help feeling anxious about your family, but none of the boys believe the thing probable."

"Of course they would not make the raid with the idea of coming back this way, but they could turn southward toward the Apache Mountains and escape."

"Not without giving us a chance, which they don't mean to give," was the remark of the young officer, uttered with such confidence that it lessened the uneasiness of the ranchman.

Sweeping over a slight elevation in front they came in sight of the ridge behind which the raiders were discovered on the preceding day. Mendez, who as guide was riding slightly in advance, turned his dusky face and looked at the lieutenant with an odd half smile.

"What is it, old fellow?"

"'Pache dere!" was the thrilling response.

"It can't be possible that they intend to make a stand," reflected Decker, bringing his glass to his eyes; "that would be too much like honorable warfare."

There were several instruments in the party, but none revealed the cause of the assertion made by Mendez. No one, however, doubted its truth.

Regardless of any shots that might be fired from the ridge, the troopers swept up the slope on the *qui vive* for the battle that seemed at hand.

But it would have been strange indeed had they come face to face with the raiders, who would have

thus been forced to fight on something like equal terms.

A mile away, however, to the westward, the whole band was seen riding as if for their lives. Geronimo and his men had no intention of meeting a force that had a fair chance with them.

Lieutenant Decker gave expression to his disappointment.

"We might have known it; they won't fight."

"But we can compel them," insisted Armon Peyser.

"How?"

"Run 'em down."

"Ah, if we *could*, but what chance have we of that?"

This question carried its own answer. Several of the scouts, including the lieutenant himself, were so well mounted that by pushing hard they might have come up with some of the fugitives; but the majority of the troopers could not do so. Their horses were no *fleeter* than those ridden by the Apaches. Besides, they were hungry and in need of rest. The task was impossible.

Another peculiar recourse was at the command of the fugitives. If they should find the pursuit growing hot, they would separate into two or three parties, these again breaking up, until perhaps every warrior would be looking out for himself. All would be scattered and fleeing for the mountains, and they would remain scattered so long as the chase continued, after which they would come together at

some rendezvous perhaps twenty or fifty miles away.

Far off to the southward a mountain range was outlined against the sky. Looking keenly toward the faint bluish line, the eyes that had the help of field-glasses traced a thin, wavy column of smoke ascending straight upward. About the same time it was noticed that Geronimo and his hostiles had headed in that direction.

“It is a signal and they are obeying it,” remarked Lieutenant Decker, who was not the only member of the party that was sorely disappointed.

Mendez checked his pony so that he fell back beside the officer, who directed his attention to the vapor, as he handed him his field-glass. The Apache held the instrument for several minutes to his eye.

“That is made by a party of Apaches?” said the lieutenant inquisitorily.

“Yes—’Paches do dat for Geronimo.”

“What does it mean?”

“Dunno.”

“It looks as if it is a call for the old fellow to go thither.”

“Yes—look like dat.”

“I don’t see the need to signal him, for he’s his own boss and knows what to do without directions from any one else.”

“Yes, he do,” assented Mendez, who seemed to be suffering from a burst of talkativeness, altogether unusual with him.

"Is there any use of our keeping up this chase, Mendez?"

"No use, big fool to chase Geronimo."

"Then we'll stop."

And the troopers drew rein, talked a few minutes, after which the lieutenant gave the orders to wheel about and return to Camp Reno.

True the pursuit of Geronimo and his dreaded warriors had ended in failure, and yet in the right sense it was a brilliant success.

The Apaches had set out to raid a portion of Sutra Valley, but were discovered in time and sent skurrying back to their fastnesses, with the loss of two of their number and without having been able to set foot within the section which they had meant to devastate. It was they who had met the most egregious failure.

The chagrin of the troopers was that they were unable to force the raiders to the wall and make them fight. Could this have been done they might have administered an effectual chastisement that would have averted woful consequences. Geronimo and these hostiles were off the reservation and were not likely to return until after inflicting some of their fearful blows. The revolt would spread and not unlikely another miniature Indian war would follow, which, if it roused little interest further east, would have dreadful significance to those exposed to its consequences.

These were the gloomy reflections that accompanied the troopers on their return to Fort Reno,

and there is little doubt that their fears would have become real, but for an unexpected series of events.

It so happened that at the very time Lieutenant Decker was engaged on his scout, a party of about the same strength was out from Fort McDowell, a considerable distance to the south. Rumors of the restlessness of the Apaches had reached them, and they discovered that a band were heading for the Sutra Valley. With no knowledge, however, that the notorious Geronimo was their leader, the cavalrymen made a determined and well-directed effort to bring the raiders to book.

They were fortunate enough to discover the fleeing hostiles when the latter were on the open plain, and the troopers had the concealment of a wooded and rocky range. Still better, the raiders headed almost directly for the point where the scouts were eagerly awaiting them.

The consequences were disastrous to the Apaches, who did not learn of their danger until the bullets of the troopers were doing their deadly work. The terrified wretches fled to the nearest cover, losing six of their number, while many others carried away serious wounds.

Geronimo himself met with an exceedingly narrow escape. He was slightly wounded by a rifle-ball and was barely able to elude two troopers who tried to run him down. Had either of them been aware of his identity at the time, that famous Apache would have scourged the border no more.

But, as will be seen, this was a severe blow to the

raiders, among whom were a number that were much discouraged by the outcome. They had counted confidently upon one of their most delightful and soul-satisfying excursions, when not only human lives but much plunder should be at their disposal, but the survivors who rejoined their families carried the gloomy news that more than one-third of their number had been killed and there was absolutely nothing to show for it.

One beneficent result, therefore, of the affair was that a formidable insurrection was nipped in the bud. Maroz and Ceballos were among those who returned to the reservation, loud in their declarations that it was useless to fight the white man longer, and they had resolved to be good Indians henceforth and forever.

When these two Apaches were questioned about their presence with Geronimo, they replied just as Lieutenant Decker said they would. They had entered his camp, as ordered by the officer, their intention being to help the white people, but Geronimo compelled them to aid him. They had made believe to do so, but were only awaiting a favorable chance to desert to their real friends.

“I think,” said the lieutenant, “that we shall have trouble with those two fellows again. What do you say, Mendez?”

“Huh! leften’t right—dey bad ‘Paches—soon make trouble.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RANCHMAN'S HOME.

THE days became weeks, the weeks grew into months and peace reigned in Southern Arizona, that section which time and again was harried by the fierce raids of the terrible Apaches, until many of the ranchmen abandoned their homes and sought safety at the posts and settlements.

The history of those outrages proves the fact which has already been hinted: had the management of the tribes been left to the army, the reign of terror would have ended years before it became necessary to run down Geronimo and the other disaffected leaders and transport them to the east, there to spend the remainder of their lives.

I have no intention of giving anything in the nature of a history of the Indian troubles in the Southwest, but a single episode will enforce what has been said.

In April, 1873, Buckskin Hat, head chief of all the Indians in the Tonto Basin, went to General Crook and said he wished to surrender. Crook took his hand and told him that if he and his people would stop their outrages and become orderly citizens, he would be the best friend they ever had. He

promised to teach them to work and agreed to find a good market for everything they could produce.

Within a month General Crook had all the Apaches in Arizona, excepting the Chiricahuas, who were not within his jurisdiction, at work at Camp Apache and Camp Verde, digging irrigating ditches, planting vegetables, cutting hay and wood and with everything on the highway to prosperity. Then a gang of politicians and contractors, remembered as the "Tucson Ring," persuaded the authorities in Washington to order the Apaches down to the dismal sand waste of the San Carlos, where the water is brackish, the soil worthless, and the flies intolerable. Roused to fury by the injustice, the Apaches took the warpath, and then followed those terrible scenes which are matters of public record.

For a long time, Maurice Freeman was so doubtful of the continuance of peace, that he was on the point of removing from the territory. Indeed he would have done so but for the persuasions of his nearest neighbor and close friend, Captain Murray, who insisted that no serious danger would come again.

"You have established a pleasant home here," said the Union veteran; "the soil is fertile; the country is rapidly settling; we shall soon have schools, churches and all the advantages of civilization; to abandon these now will be to throw away that golden opportunity which does not come twice to a man in this life. I intend to stick and you will regret it if you do not."

And so Maurice Freeman allowed himself to be persuaded and stayed.

By the time the frightfully hot summer was drawing to close, Freeman was so convinced of the wisdom of the advice given by his friend that he thanked him for it.

“There hasn’t been a ripple since that flareup last winter,” remarked Freeman, as he sat in a chair at the front of his neighbor’s house and smoked a pipe with him; “it looks as if Geronimo, Natchez and the rest have made up their minds to do like their race further east—accept the inevitable.”

“Of course,” replied Murray; “an Indian isn’t a fool and when he sees it’s no use of fighting longer he stops—that is, he generally does,” added the speaker, conscious that his assertion needed a slight qualification. “There will be occasional disturbances now and then, but they will never amount to anything.”

“Do you think we shall ever have a raid through this section?”

“Never,” was the emphatic response; “it’s too risky for those that attempt it; they haven’t the chance of success that they had a year or even six months ago. The soldiers at Camp Reno and the other posts are on the alert and would detect anything of the kind before it could come to a head.”

“I can’t feel quite so sure on that score as you,” observed Freeman, with a vivid recollection of the incidents of the previous winter; “it was only by the merest accident that we learned of Geronimo’s coming in time to head him off.”

"You must remember that that was more than six months ago and great changes have taken place since then."

"I don't question that fact, but the Apaches are the worst desperadoes when roused that ever cursed this continent."

"By the way, captain, how was it you learned of that intended raid? I was here at home and never knew of it until you came back with the news."

"I have never been able to find out the exact means by which the news reached the ears of Lieutenant Decker and his troopers. I was coming from Fort Reno, when I met him and two of his scouts, Mendez and Cemuri, who were hunting for the hostiles. I presume that he got it from those two White Mountain Apaches, who are the shrewdest fellows at that business I ever knew. The lieutenant virtually admitted as much to me, though he never gave the particulars."

"What has become of Mendez and Cemuri?"

"They have remained on the reservation, like the loyal fellows they are, but they are so useful to the colonel that he keeps them continually within call. There are several peculiarities about those scouts."

"What are they?"

"Both are so addicted to that infernal tiswin, that there's no saying when they will not make themselves helpless from drinking it, and the next is that they seem to have become fond of Maroz and Ceballos, two other Apaches."

Captain Murray smiled.

"I see nothing peculiar in an Apache Indian being fond of tiswin ; indeed he would be eccentric if he was not, and what is remarkable in their association with two others of their race?"

"During that flurry last winter, Maroz and Ceballos were among the fiercest allies that Geronimo had. Mendez overheard a conversation between the two and Geronimo which proved their treachery. At that time, Mendez would have shot both could he have gained the chance. He and Cemuri know they cannot be trusted and yet they seem to be bosom friends."

Captain Murray could not restrain the remark :

" You wore the gray and I the blue ; it is not so many years ago that we were striving to kill each other ; I don't think there's much of the desire left. You must bear in mind that this is the era of good feeling."

" Ah, my dear fellow, your examples are not parallel. You and I, like tens of thousands similarly placed, will be the best of friends to the end, but an Indian's nature is different. He will nurse his wrongs for ten or twenty years, to break out in a fury when least expected. But," added Freeman, " you will begin to suspect from my words that I am giving away to idle fears, which is not the case. I believe with you that there's not one chance in—say a score—of this part of the country being raided by hostile Indians."

" Say not one chance in a thousand and you will be in accord with my views."

"I can hardly put it as strong as that; but I'm going to ride over to the fort to-morrow, and as the day is sure to be like tophet, I will leave my Winchester at home."

"You would be foolish to do otherwise. I haven't carried mine for two months past. The iron gets so hot that if you don't look out it will blister your hands, and the burden is an unnecessary one."

"Then," added Freeman slyly, "if the Apaches should happen to make one of their raids while I am away, it will be a handy thing for Molly, for she knows how to use it."

"Have an end with such jests," said his friend impatiently, "or I will begin to suspect that you do not believe what you have just been telling me."

"Well, we will drop it," said Freeman, shaking out the ashes of his pipe and refilling it; "I can only repeat my thanks for your arguments which prevented me from pulling up stakes last spring and leaving the country for good."

"I may have been a trifle selfish about it, for I didn't wish to lose a good neighbor, with whom I could sit down and fight over our old battles without either of us losing our temper. Since I admit that all the bravery during the war was on your side and you have graciously conceded that there wasn't a bit except on mine, why the dispute has never become serious."

"Well," remarked the visitor some time later, "the night is wearing on and I will go home.

Where is Fulton?" he asked, looking around as he rose to his feet.

"Your little boy ran off half an hour ago. My youngster wanted him to stay all night, but Fulton said it was Jack's turn to stay with him and he wouldn't."

"Why didn't you let Jack do so?"

"His mother thought he had better wait until to-morrow."

"Good-night," called Freeman to his neighbor, who responded, and remained at the front smoking for an hour or more after his departure.

It was not a long walk to the home of Maurice Freeman. When he reached there, he found it later than he suspected, for his little boy and girl had been put to bed and were asleep.

The husband announced that he expected to visit the fort next day, and at his request his wife named a few small articles for him to obtain for her. The journey to Phœnix or Prescott was so much longer, that neither Freeman nor Murray went thither except when necessary. The ride to Fort Reno, ten miles away, could be easily made within the day and allow a good call at the post.

"I have been talking with Murray," said the husband, recalling their conversation; "he insists that we shall never again be in danger from the Apaches. I am inclined to agree with him, though I can't feel quite as positive as he. I told him, however, that I intended to leave my Winchester

at home, when I visit the camp to-morrow. What do you think of it, Molly?"

Was it that wonderful intuition of her sex which led the wife to reply without an instant's hesitation, "Leave the Winchester with me, Maurice?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHADOW OF DANGER.

MAURICE FREEMAN was correct in his prophecy of the weather for the following day. As had been intimated, the temperature in some portions of the Southwest, attains an intensity during the summer and early autumn, which makes one wonder how animal life withstands it. For weeks the thermometer ranges far above a hundred, and there is a record of it standing over a large area at one hundred and ten at midnight, for a full week.

Life would be unbearable except for the dryness of the climate, which renders a day more tolerable than many in the east that are twenty degrees lower, with a humidity which makes existence a burden.

But Freeman was a native of the extreme South and had lived in Arizona long enough to become acclimated. He saw before the sun rose that another "scorcher" was coming, but it did not deter him from his intended twenty-mile ride to Fort Reno and back. He partook of an early meal, kissed his little boy and girl good-by and did the same with his brave wife. Holding her for a moment in his arms, he looked down in her brown eyes and said :

“And so, Molly, you think it best that I should leave the gun at home? Have you any special reason for thinking so?”

“It will be a burden to you, during this hot day,” was her evasive answer.

“But I have carried it many times and found it no burden.”

“And of late you have left it behind because it was an incumbrance; if you prefer to take it, do so.”

“I prefer always to please my little wife,” he said, kissing her once more, and finally: “I pray that neither of us will ever need it again for the use to which it has been put so many times.”

A few minutes later he was in the saddle and headed for Fort Reno. He had abundance of time at command and rode past the home of his friend, Captain Murray.

“Is there anything I can do for you?” he called, as the two greeted each other.

“Nothing for me, thanks, but something for yourself.”

“What’s that?”

“Keep cool; we are going to have another pull at the furnace; I don’t envy you your ride.”

“I got used to all sorts of weather in the army; so did you, but you are growing effeminate; luxury and idleness are bad things, captain.”

“But none the less enjoyable for all that. How is it you haven’t your Winchester with you?”

“Didn’t I tell you last night that I meant to leave

it with Molly, so that she shall be able to defend herself, during my absence?"

"Defend herself against what?"

"Nothing; adios, my old friend."

Freeman looked back as he made his military salute, which was cordially answered by Murray. That parting will be remembered by Freeman as long as he lives.

"He is right," reflected the ranchman, as he struck the trail leading northward to the military post which was his destination; "months have passed since there has been a rumor of trouble with the hostiles, and every week lessens the danger which has hung over our homes like a pall of death."

"In a comparative sense the early part of the day was pleasant. The frightful heat would be felt in all its intensity, as the sun climbed to meridian and descended the western sky; and, since there was abundant time in which to let his horse rest, Freeman spurred him to an easy gallop, which was continued without break for mile after mile.

Two-thirds of the way was passed, when, in riding up a slight elevation, the ranchman came face to face with five Apaches, all of whom were well mounted and armed. They were strangers, but the white man knew they had been with the hostiles in the recent troubles.

"It might be a handy thing if I had my rifle with me just now," he thought; "and yet this may be one of the occasions when a man without weapons

is safer than a walking arsenal, for he isn't tempted to do anything rash."

A viciously inclined Indian is quick to seize his opportunity. These five Apaches, if they chose, could shoot the white man from his horse in a twinkling, and the chances were that justice would never overtake them, for no torture could force any member of the party to betray the other.

The best course was to put a bold face on the matter and Freeman did so. Instead of shying off or making any move to avoid the Indians, he rode directly toward them, so close indeed that there was only room for them to meet and pass without brushing knees. It need not be said, however, that the white man kept his "weather eye" open.

As the parties came opposite, Freeman made a salute, smiled and called out :

"Howdy ?"

They responded in kind, one of them, who seemed to be of mixed breed, grinning to the extent of showing the two rows of his fine white teeth. Their ponies were walking and Freeman's heart beat a little faster, when they seemed about to stop; but he affected not to notice it and held the same easy, swinging gallop.

The real trial was within the few minutes following this meeting. Nothing was easier than for all five to turn and fire a volley, and he half expected they would do so. It was hard to restrain himself from spurring his horse into a dead run and leaning forward on his neck. This would have been his

course had the Apaches made any demonstration, but they did not, and he shrank from showing distrust, much as prudence urged him to do so.

He had ridden less than a hundred yards when he turned and looked behind him. All the Indians were riding away at the same moderate pace and not one displayed any interest in him.

The sight was an inspiriting one and did much to remove the misgiving that had been with him to a greater or less degree ever since he left home.

“That’s one of the most decisive tests of what Captain Murray has been insisting upon for the past week,” reflected Freeman, with a thrill of pleasure. “It is not so many months since that a meeting like this, where I am beyond any help, would have been my death warrant, but now they do not even turn to look at me.”

A half hour later he arrived at the fort, where he was always welcome. He was acquainted with all the officers, whose life at these remote inland posts is sometimes intolerably monotonous. It is the same routine, day after day, month after month, from one year’s end to the other, with the eternal brassy sky overhead, the dreary stretch of sandy waste which grows more hateful to the eye, and the vain sighing for an exchange with some of the more favored posts, or a transfer to another branch of the service.

To many of the ardent young officers who leave West Point and assume the stirring duties of military life, the news of trouble with the red men is

most welcome. It not only serves to break the monotony, but opens the prospect of the realization of every soldier's hope—promotion.

When making his call upon the colonel, Freeman related the incident of his meeting with the Apaches, commenting upon it as a pleasing omen. The bronzed campaigner smiled and nodded his head.

“Such is probably the fact; I know the bucks, for they were here this morning; there is not a worse set of scoundrels on the reservation. One of them was the right hand of Cochise, before he became a good Indian, another was with Natchez, and the remaining three are murderers.”

“And yet they did not offer to molest me.”

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

“No, times have changed mightily within the past year, and yet I cannot feel that this calm is sure to last.”

“Why should it not continue forever?”

“Because human nature is as it is; if the politicians would not interfere with our management of the Apaches, there would be no trouble. Those people, or rather the leaders, have had all the fighting they want. They would settle down and give no more trouble if treated right, but as long as politics are what they are, so long will there be the mischief to pay on the frontier.”

The officer had touched upon a phase of the question to which Freeman had not lately given much thought. The views of the colonel were

those of an experienced and well-informed man and they impressed his listener.

“ You know, captain,” he continued, “ that the Indian doesn’t forget a wrong. He may seem to do so, but none the less he broods over the injustice he has suffered, and when he strikes the rule is that it is the innocent and not the guilty who suffer. When they have been plundered and robbed by the ‘ring,’ they turn upon and kill innocent men, women and children. They simply regard themselves the victims of the Caucasian and strike him wherever and whenever the chance offers.”

“ But this thing cannot go on forever. I have been half inclined more than once to move out of the Sutra Valley, but my old friend, Captain Murray, my next door neighbor, dissuaded me. Do you think I have acted wisely ?”

The colonel pulled the ends of his mustache and puffed thoughtfully at his cigar before answering:

“ I hope so—yes, I think you have; the danger is certainly less now than at any time in the past; and, since you have gone through all that without harm, the inference is fair that your chances are better than ever.”

“ Your views cause me some uneasiness, colonel.”

“ I did not mean that they should; I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but try to look at things as they are. Peace reigns now, but so long as we have the Apaches with us, and so long as evil men have the power to control Indian affairs, so long are

we certain to have trouble. It may be that the authorities will learn wisdom after awhile and show common sense in treating with the 'wards of the nation,' but I confess I have little hope of their doing so for a long time to come."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CRUEL BLOW.

FREEMAN, having finished his call at the fort and given his horse a good rest, remounted for his return home. Despite the proofs received of the good will of the Apaches on the reservation, he was disturbed because of the opinion expressed by the colonel.

It was at this juncture that startling news came to the military post. Mendez, our old friend, the White Mountain scout, dashed up, his horse covered with foam, and his own appearance showing rough treatment. It was not often that the stolid fellow displayed agitation or excitement, but he was greatly disturbed, as his story proved he had good reason to be.

His statement was that Maroz and Ceballos had thrown off the mask they had worn so long, had left the reservation and were at that moment well on their way to the Apache Mountains, to the south of the Gila. Those fastnesses once reached, they could defy the whole United States army to remove them.

It was not the simple fact alone that these two turbulent spirits had cast aside their disguise, but they were sure to induce other disaffected ones to

join them. Should they succeed in gathering a dozen warriors or even less around them, another costly Indian campaign was inevitable and a reign of terror would follow in Southern Arizona.

Questioned regarding his old comrade Cemuri, Mendez replied that he was dead, slain by Maroz in the most treacherous manner conceivable. It was evident that there had been a desperate fight, for Mendez carried with him evidences of his own savage treatment.

It was noted by some of those who listened to the story, that Mendez was confused in a few of the details. Those who knew him well saw evidence that he had been indulging in the bane of his life, "tiswin," that curse of so many of his people, but the exciting incident in which he had taken a prominent part had sobered him and he was fully himself.

Little time, however, was given to questioning the scout. The alarming danger was manifest to all. Serious work was at hand. Not an hour must be lost in pursuing the hostiles, whose example was likely to spread like a prairie fire. There was a hasty call to saddle, and in less time than would be deemed possible, several cavalrymen, all of whom had seen similar service, were scurrying to the southeast.

Naturally the first thought of Maurice Freeman, when he learned what had occurred, was his own family, ten miles away, with no suspicion of danger. He pictured the little brother and sister at play out-

doors and the mother singing about her household duties, while the fearful shadow stole down upon them, as the deadly serpent winds its way through the tall grass and strikes its blow before its presence is suspected.

He thought, too, of Captain Murray, whose confidence in the continuance of peace was not to be shaken by argument or persuasion. He had ridiculed the fears of Freeman, but what would he say now when the news reached him?

Freeman had never taken pains to conceal his distrust of Maroz and Ceballos, after learning of their treachery the previous winter when Geronimo was turned back from his contemplated raid into the Sutra Valley. In fact, the ranchman had told Maroz to his face that he deserved shooting for his double dealing, and if he could have his way he would see that such punishment was inflicted. There could be no doubt, therefore, that the two renegades remembered the bitter words and would be eager to wreak revenge upon him who uttered them.

And yet there was one feature of the situation which brought the ranchman unspeakable relief. Mendez had said that when the hostiles leaped upon their ponies they headed for the Apache Mountains, which, it will be borne in mind, are on the southern side of the Salt River, while the Sutra Valley, in which he and a few of his friends had their homes, lies to the north. That broad, winding stream flows between, besides which an additional number of miles separate the two sections.

This knowledge I repeat was a great relief to the ranchman, as he turned the head of his horse homeward. So long as the hostiles pushed southward, so long was the safety of his family assured. There was no call to press his pony, especially as the heat was increasing and the animal was likely to suffer more than his rider.

“It’s a curious coincidence,” he reflected, “that it is two years this very day since we moved into the Territory. Molly and I have had hard work,” he added, as he drew a match along his thigh and lighted his pipe without checking his steed, “and she has been a true helpmate to me. We have a comfortable home and no sickness has visited us. Settlers are coming into the valley and before long we shall a town the rival of Tucson, Prescott, Phoenix, Benson and the rest of them. Then will come the churches and schools that Captain Murray is looking for, and we shall be able to educate our children properly ; but permanent peace must first be established.”

The course of the trail was almost parallel with the river, but some distance from it crossing several small streams, most of which were fringed with stunted trees, where a grateful shade could be secured. He humored his faithful animal so far as he could, without allowing him to halt, until two-thirds of the distance was passed.

One fact curiously disturbed Freeman, despite the assurance received from Mendez: it was that he had left his Winchester at home by the direct

request of his wife. He recalled that more than once in their lives her intuition, or whatever it may be termed, had revealed to her the shadow of coming events, when he saw nothing of them. Could it be so in the present instance?

The strange misgiving grew upon him as he advanced, until finally he touched spur to his horse, and despite the extreme heat, struck him into a gallop.

“There can’t be any doubt of Mendez,” he concluded; “and when he said the two headed southward for the mountains, on the other side of the river, he spoke the truth, but Maroz and Ceballos may have changed their minds, without his knowledge, or possibly the action of the hostiles was intended to mislead him. Laying their plans to draw the soldiers into the Apache Mountains, they could have recrossed the stream, dashed the few remaining miles, and swept through the valley like a whirlwind.

Lest it may seem that the fear of Freeman was groundless, it should be remembered that there were no ranches or settlements on the southern side of the river in that vicinity. They were to the east and west, but so far removed as to be in little danger from this particular band of hostiles.

The innate viciousness of the Apache nature would not allow them simply to take to the mountains, and there defy the United States Government to bring them back: that would be altogether too tame. They must strike one or two

blows, even though they knew the great personal risk involved.

Those blows, as a matter of course, would be delivered where the best opportunity offered. The nearest white people would receive them, and the ones thus exposed were the several families along the Sutra Valley, of which his own was one.

It will be seen, therefore, that Maurice Freeman was in anything but a restful frame of mind as his mustang cantered along the trail leading from Fort Reno, up the Sutra Valley, to the several homes scattered throughout that section.

“I hope I am mistaken,” he said, “but I can only wait and see.”

He strained his eyes toward the point where he knew his cabin stood, and which must rise to view before going a half mile further. If the Apaches were there, the first sign to catch his eye would be the smoke from his burning home; the next the lifeless bodies of his wife and children, and no man ever prayed more fervently than he that the sight might be spared to him.

But if the hostiles were in the neighborhood, he did not forget that he himself was riding into imminent and increasing peril. Those Apaches have more than once ambushed a wagon train, in the middle of a sandy plain, devoid of every tree, rock and blade of grass. The searching glances which he cast to the right and left, as he sped along, might flit over the very spot where the warriors were crouching and waiting for him to come a little nearer before opening their deadly fire.

But he could not afford to wait or follow a more circuitous course: his anxiety was to reach his family with the least possible delay.

A little further, and his eager eyes would catch sight of that humble home, where all that was dear in this world was gathered. He had but to gallop down that little slope just ahead, across the tiny stream winding below, then up the higher slope beyond, when the valley would open out before him for miles.

The pony seemed to catch the excitement, and, without waiting for the touch of the spur, he increased his pace, even though the pitiless rays of the sun scorched his haunches and flanks until the steamy perspiration dried up and vanished. The sky above the site of his home remained of crystalline clearness and the pulsating atmosphere was unstained by any vapor.

Splash, splash, dashed the mustang through the shallow water without pausing to moisten his parching throat—then up the brief incline at the same headlong speed, and the next moment the rider uttered a groan and his heart seemed to cease beating; for, directly ahead, he saw the ascending smoke of a burning building.

“The Apaches are there!” he exclaimed, and he was right.

CHAPTER XVII.

“NOW FOR IT.”

IT WAS at the moment Maurice Freeman's mustang struck the crest of the slight elevation, beyond the small brook, that he despaired the ominous vapor rising in the direction of his own home.

There could be but one cause for the smoke that was growing denser every minute; it was from a burning building that had been fired by the renegade Apaches, Maroz and Ceballos, with perhaps several others they had gathered in their flight from the reservation; but the parent's anguish was quickly relieved by the discovery that, instead of rising from the ruins of his own home, it ascended from the dwelling of Captain Murray, further up the valley. The two houses being in a line, it was natural that Freeman in his alarm should make the mistake, which he saw almost instantly.

But the relief was only momentary. The renegades were at hand, and had probably visited the nearest cabin before laying the other in flames. As the settler spurred his pony into a dead run, and without any thought of the consequences to himself, he was terrified by the tomblike stillness and the absence of all signs of life.

“They have done their work there and hurried on to the captain’s,” was his thought.

But never did the brave Molly look so sweet and beautiful, even in the delightful long ago, as when she stepped from the front door of the home with the Winchester in one hand, while she waved the other in salutation to her husband. The happy man snatched off his slouch hat, swung it aloft, and emitted a shout of joy such as he and his brothers sent forth when making the desperate charge in the heat of battle that led to victory.

“It looks as if it wasn’t a mistake after all,” he concluded, “to leave my gun behind me.”

He was out of the saddle before the panting pony could halt, and caught her in his arms.

“Thank God, Molly!” he exclaimed, “but what does this mean?” he asked, observing her white face and trembling form. “Has anything happened to the children? Where are they? Ah, Fannie?”

And catching the tiny girl in his arms, he flung her aloft and caught her as she came down, fairly smothering her with kisses, while his own eyes grew dim with tears.

“Now, Fulton, my little man, it is *your* turn!”

But the longing gaze showed no sign of the little fellow through the open door, and he turned affrightedly to the wife who had sunk upon the bench just outside, and was on the verge of swooning.

“Molly!” he said, releasing Fannie, and tenderly placing his hand upon his wife’s shoulder; “what is the trouble? Where is Fulton?”

"I—don't—know!" was the faint response.

"Why, mamma let him go to Mr. Murray's," said the sister in her artless manner, "and he hasn't come back yet."

It was the father now who was in danger of giving way. The loved forms, the house and all objects in his field of vision began flickering in an odd fashion before his eyes—darkness hovered in the air, and he stepped weakly to the bench, beside his wife, without uttering a word.

But he was a strong man, and speedily gained the mastery of himself. Molly had done the same, and with the eager eyes of her husband fixed upon her white face, she told her story.

Their little boy had gone to the home of Captain Murray, as Fannie said, to spend the day with the captain's children. He went early in the morning, and she had no expectation of seeing him again until late in the afternoon.

It was perhaps two hours later when Fannie, who was playing outside, hurried within, saying some Indians were coming over the ridge on horseback, and they were riding fast toward the house. Mrs. Freeman was too quick-witted to hesitate a moment. The approaching red men might be friendly or they might be enemies. The fact of their speeding so hard in the direction of the house was startling, and, without waiting to decide the question, she took the wise course of acting on the theory that they were enemies.

The door was hastily barred ; Fannie was placed

in a corner where no stray shots could reach her, and taking down the Winchester the mother peered cautiously out of one of the windows. She saw four repellent Apaches reining up their ponies, less than a hundred yards away; she saw them, too, bring their guns to their shoulders, and the next instant the room was filled with fragments of window panes, shattered by their bullets.

The woman wanted no other proof than this of the designs of her assailants. Kneeling on the floor, she rested the barrel of the Winchester on the window sill, and keeping so far back that she was not seen, took deliberate aim and pulled the trigger.

The shot hit the bull's-eye. She had handled the weapon many a time before, and she was as cool as a veteran when she tumbled the Apache to the earth. He had time to utter only a single screech when he stretched out motionless on the ground, with his mustang circling beyond in frightened bewilderment.

Without shifting her position, Mrs. Freeman fired again. She did damage, though to a less extent than before. Her bullet bored its way through the pony of a second warrior, and he stumbled to the ground so suddenly that his rider was obliged to move nimbly to avoid being caught beneath.

The Apaches had not counted upon this reception, and the survivors lost no time in placing themselves further from the rifle that was speaking so effectively. The single defender kept close watch

upon them, but it will be seen, that despite the brilliant manner in which she had acquitted herself, she was still in great peril. There was only one condition that could save her.

Maroz, Ceballos and their surviving ally did not dare to wait long enough to push the fight. They were aware that their flight from the reservation had become known, and more than likely a squad of cavalry was already thundering on their trail. There was no hope in lingering in the Sutra Valley, nor indeed anywhere north of the river. Their destination was the Apache Mountains to the south, and they had but to delay their flight only a brief while to find it cut off altogether.

But for this, they would have pressed the attack, burned the house, despite all the brave woman could do, and wreaked revenge on her and her child; but an Apache is too cunning to run unnecessary risk.

During the five or ten minutes following the fall of the hostile, one of the survivors gave an exhibition of the astonishing activity and power of his people. He made a dash across the open plain, and, though the riderless pony was going at high speed, he overhauled him in a twinkling, leaped deftly upon his bare back, wheeled him short round, and plunged toward the cabin, as if making a direct charge upon it.

While the amazed wife was holding her rifle in position, and wondering what all this could mean, the steed described a graceful circle and his rider became invisible for a few seconds. He had thrown

himself over the animal's side, and, holding himself in position by one foot curved over the pony's neck and the left hand knotted in his mane, he reached down with the other arm, and, hardly abating the pace of his horse, slid it under the body of his lifeless comrade, and swung back to an upright position, with the limp form held securely in front.

The better to execute this feat, he had cast his rifle to the earth, so as to allow the unrestrained use of his hands. He now guided the mustang to the spot where the weapon lay on the parched grass, and, still riding fast, and with one arm fully engaged in sustaining the body in position, he leaned over again, snatched up his Winchester as if it were a handkerchief, inclined himself forward to escape the expected shot, and with the same speed as at first, joined his companions, who were calmly awaiting him.

Mrs. Freeman might have brought down the miscreant while he was engaged in this daring feat, but she was mystified until the most striking part was over, and then, womanlike, a feeling of sympathy restrained the shot, which she regretted very soon had not been fired.

From a distance, too great to render them effective, the Apaches discharged several parting shots, and dashed up the valley in the direction of Captain Murray's home. The danger, so far as Mrs. Freeman and Fannie were concerned, was over, for, as has been shown, the Apaches did not dare wait nor return.

But when she observed the ponies with their fierce riders speeding up the valley like a whirlwind, she recalled that her only son, little Fulton, was at the nearest dwelling, and that he, like the family, was in a peril whose imminence could not be exaggerated.

The mother was in a sad state of bewilderment. But for the young daughter, she would have set out on foot, or mounted the remaining pony, grazing some distance away, where it had escaped the raiders, and hurried to the help of the imperiled ones. Who shall understand her agony when, shortly after, she heard the rifle-shots and soon discerned the dark smoke which told that the Apaches had met with far more success in their second than in their first attempt?

It was at this trying moment that she opened the door and peered to the westward, in the hope of seeing her husband returning from Fort Reno. The wish was granted, and, hurrying forward, it required only a few minutes for him to learn all that had taken place.

If the wife could not hasten to the help of her child, the husband was granted that privilege.

"You are safe here, Molly," said he, springing to his feet, "even though I must leave you without any weapons; the Apaches are making for the mountains, and the soldiers are after them. I will hurry up the valley to the captain's, and possibly may be able to do something, though there is little hope."

The second pony was not in sight, and he feared

it had been stolen by the marauders, but the grass was much better on the other side of the ridge, in the direction of the river, and the mustangs generally wandered to that neighborhood when left to themselves. The signals of the owner were quickly answered by the animal, which came trotting over the elevation, with a whinny, as if of inquiry, and stood quiet while the saddle, bridle and accouterments were transferred from the other animal to him.

An affectionate embrace and kiss were given to the wife and little one, and then, swinging himself into the saddle, Maurice Freeman pointed the nose of his mustang up the valley, and spurred him to a dead run, with outstretched neck, flying mane and tail and snorting nostrils. As if he understood that he had set out to save human life, he paid no more heed to the blistering heat than did his rider, who closed his mouth hard, as he refilled the empty chambers of his Winchester without drawing rein.

The wooden structure, which was Captain Murray's home, had been seasoned by the flaming sun for weeks and months, so that when the torch was applied it burned like tinder. Before half the distance was passed by the furious rider, it was a mass of smouldering ruins, from which the smoke still ascended and stained the clear air above.

Freeman now drew rein, for it would have been folly to continue his headlong flight without learning what was in front. He saw nothing of white men or Indians, as he drew still nearer, and rightly

suspected that the hostiles, having delivered their blow, were now making for the mountains with all speed.

“And where is the captain?—where is his wife?—where are his children?—and where, heaven tell me! is my own boy?”

It was the last query that wrung his heart with an anguish, such as only a parent can feel, when he believes that a loved child is irrecoverably lost.

“They have gone,” he added, as he made a cautious circle of the smoking ruins, “they have done their work well——”

The most torturing trial of his life was now upon him. When he muttered to himself that the Apaches had done their work well, he meant far more than the burning of the home. That was a trifle compared with the other sight which greeted him while making his awed circuit of the ruins.

He saw the forms stretched on the ground, with their white faces turned toward the brassy sky, and he needed no one to tell him what it meant. There was the father, lying within a dozen steps of the wife, whom he had defended with his last breath, and just beyond, and nearer the doorstep, a little girl lay with one dimpled arm doubled under her cheek, as if she were sleeping. And so she was, but it was the long dreamless slumber which knows no waking in this world.

The sight which caused the heart of the father to stand still was that of the figure of a little boy, still nearer and indeed on the very threshold. His

face was turned away, so that he could not see the features, and the clothing was so disarranged that he could not identify it.

At such times suspense is unbearable. Without dismounting he forced his reluctant pony so close to the burning wood that the additional heat checked him. Then he leaned over his saddle, and peered down into the face of the boy, now in plain view.

It was Jack, the son of his old friend, or rather what was left of the lad.

Then, with the same hard expression on his countenance, the father straightened up in his saddle, and allowed his gaze to roam over the burning sticks, beams and timbers, the most of which was already ashes. He did not spare himself, and, when the survey was completed, he knew that which he dreaded to see with an unspeakable dread was not there, nor anywhere near.

“Yes,” he repeated, casting his eyes around the immediate field of vision, “they have done their work well. The captain, his wife, his little child, and boy are all gone—perished within a few minutes of each other. Why my child is not among them I do not understand. For some cause they have spared him yet awhile, but what hope is there of his mother or me ever seeing him alive again?”

A shout caused him to turn his head quickly, and look to the southward. There they were: five horsemen coming down upon him like mad. At their head, was handsome James Decker, the young lieu-

tenant from West Point, who was getting a further taste of soldiering in dead earnest.

The lieutenant's companions were veterans, and all had been in the service before he was born. Our old friends Armon Peyser, Budge Colgate and Jack Redfield served creditably during the Civil War, and the leader had already learned something of Mendez, the White Mountain Apache, who was the guide to the party. As for that, both Colgate and Redfield were almost, if not quite, as familiar with the fastnesses of the Apache Mountains as Mendez, for they had been in more than one campaign that led them thither.

It was the lieutenant who uttered the shout that turned the gaze of Freeman to the ridge, on the crest of which they had just appeared. He had recognized the man, and the latter knew him the moment he looked up.

Instead of continuing down the slope to the site of the burned building, the young officer called :

“If you want to join us, hurry up !”

Freeman answered by sending his pony off at a rate which quickly placed him among the eager group.

“I see they've been there,” remarked Decker, with a nod toward the smoking ruins.

“I should say they had,” was the bitter response.

“Did they wipe them all out ?”

“They did not spare one.”

“Your family was fortunate.”

“Yes, but they have carried off my little boy,” replied the father in a broken voice.

“Is it possible?” was the sympathetic response ; “there may be a chance of recovering him. Those fellows played us a sharp trick. They left a plain trail, straight to the river, and without sticking to it, we made for another and better crossing, only to learn, after reaching the other side, that they had entered the river, waded up stream a little way, and then turned back again. Their natural viciousness would not allow them to leave without striking this blow, even though it was so dangerous to themselves. They have picked up two allies.”

“But have only one left ; the other was a victim to my Winchester, fired by my wife.”

“Good ! that’s business ; but here’s the trail leading directly toward the river, and they can’t be far ahead. Do you want to go with us ?”

“I wouldn’t turn back for the world, till I learn what has become of my boy.”

“It’s only two miles to the river, and we may overtake them before they cross. We are well mounted and here we go !”

And the dashing officer thundered away on a dead run, with the rest bunched closely on the flanks of his mustang. The ground was gently undulating, and they skimmed over it with arrowy swiftness until the lieutenant, who maintained his position slightly in advance, rose in his stirrups, and, peering ahead, shouted :

“Yonder they are, boys ! There’s a fight ahead ! Now for them !”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“SEE DERE!”

LIEUTENANT JAMES DECKER had been warned more than once by the older and more experienced officers of his regiment that, sooner or later, his ardor would bring him to grief. He was so eager for a brush with the Apaches, that he charged headlong into the affray, forgetful that the foe was the most cunning, brave and skillful of any tribe on the American continent.

It was Decker who, on his first campaign against Geronimo, brought a sharp reprimand upon himself from the captain, for his recklessness in front of a rocky edge, at a time when it was known the wily chieftain and his band had been brought to bay. The command had dismounted, and were lying on the ground, behind their prostrate steeds, or whatever protection they could secure, waiting for a chance at the miscreants, among the rocks, but a short distance away. And while they were lying thus, what did the lieutenant do but spur his pony forward, and deliberately gallop back and forth, between the two lines, where it would seem it was the easiest thing in the world for Geronimo or one of his men to tumble him from the saddle.

At first Captain Grindle could hardly believe his eyes; then he thought the young officer was "rattled" to that extent that he was unaware of what he was doing; but he quickly saw the true state of affairs, and Decker was ordered instantly to fall back. As he turned to obey the peremptory command, several shots were fired from the rocks behind him, but, scorning to throw himself forward on the neck of his animal, he rode slowly back, freely expressing his opinion of the timidity of the other officers and men.

It was Decker, too, who, on another occasion of still greater peril, pretended he did not hear the order of his superior officer to withdraw, and spurred his horse straight at a group of red men, using his revolver and sword with a vigor and effect that thrilled the veteran campaigners who witnessed the scene. It took a charge of a dozen cavalrymen to extricate the fellow, but he came back without a scratch. He did good service, too, as has been told, in checking the raid of Geronimo the previous winter.

Somehow or other, the best of fortune had attended Lieutenant Decker thus far. He had played the part of target for Apache rifles more times than he could count, but the astonishing fact remained that not a hair of his head had as yet been harmed.

But this could not last, however. Unless he mended his ways and showed more discretion, he must go down as many a brave man had gone before him. But, as I have said, he was liked by his

command and associates; for, aside from his fine personal qualities, he was a leader, instead of a follower, in all emergencies where dashing heroism was required.

Every one of the six men who gave their steeds rein and charged southward toward the Gila in pursuit of the fleeing Apaches was splendidly mounted. It would have been folly to take up the pursuit under any other conditions. The time was likely to come when their animals could not serve them, and they would have to dismount and push on afoot, but until then they must ride hard and unceasingly.

The well-known qualities of the leader of the little company caused Maurice Freeman keen misgiving. He knew that if ever the moment should arrive when Maroz and Ceballos saw they could not hold their little prisoner, they would put him to death with no more compunction than they would crush the rattlesnake in their path. In an enterprise of this kind there was urgent call for subtlety of the highest order. The father was so impressed with the fact that he reminded the lieutenant of it while they were riding side by side. Decker nodded his head, and said :

“I won’t forget it; I wish the boy was somewhere else, not only for his own sake, but that his presence among the Apaches might not handicap us. I would like to drive those fellows into a corner before they could cross, and then sail into them! There would be three less Apaches to raise the mischief than now.”

“But what do you intend to do?” asked the parent, unable to understand his plans without more enlightenment.

The lieutenant turned his frank face toward the anxious one on his left, and replied :

“The prime object of this business is to save your boy ; I know how you feel, and I feel for you ; the colonel and the rest comdemn me for being reckless, but that is only where *men* are involved ; I’ll show that I can be as cautious and as patient as any of them, when there is need of being so.”

“But—lieutenant——”

“I know what you are going to say ; my actions just now don’t indicate that, for they mean a fight. Nevertheless, I’ll prove my earnestness if I have the chance. My plan is to bring them to bay this side of the river. Then, before we fire a shot, I’ll let them know that, if they surrender and give up the boy, they won’t be punished.”

“But how can you do *that*?” was the astonished inquiry of Freeman.

“Easily ; I’ve been in the country long enough to pick up a fair knowledge of their lingo, and you’ll admit that I am the proprietor of a pretty good voice.”

“But will the murder of Captain Murray and his family be allowed to go unpunished?”

“It ought not to, but that will have to be a condition. The colonel told me when I left the fort to get word to Maroz and Ceballos that they would be treated leniently if they stopped at once and

returned to the reservation. We knew they had slain Cemuri, but that would be overlooked.”

“ Think of Captain Murray and his family !”

“ I have done so ; the colonel, if he knew that, would not permit the offer on my part, but I have his warrant for giving the pledge, and I’ll do it for the sake of your child, if the chance is given. There is dishonesty among the traders and some of the settlers, but the renegades know as well as you that when the army makes a pledge it will be kept, no matter at what cost.”

Maurice Freeman always admired the dashing lieutenant, but he never appeared so handsome to him as when, with a glowing face, he uttered these words. The heart of the brave fellow was as tender as a woman’s and the prime purpose of the dangerous business on which he had entered was to save the innocent child from the fate that impended over it.

Meantime the chase was pushed with all possible vigor. Every pony was doing his level best, and neither he nor his rider cared for the pitiless rays that darted down upon their heads like spears of fire. There was scarcely a tree between them and the river flowing across their course. A couple of brooks were passed, but the major portion of the route was an undulating plain, sandy in most places, but rich and fertile in others, with a surprising luxuriance of grass, which rendered it a favorite grazing resort for animals.

Further to the west and north, where many

extensive ranches were to be found, the grazing was no better, and often not so good. Miles to the southward, beyond the calmly flowing river, the rugged Apache range lifted its crest against the sky, stretching east and west, further than the eye could reach, and forming one of the wildest spurs of the Rocky Mountain system.

It was toward the fastnesses of this range that the hostiles were making with the desperate energy of men who knew that success meant life and failure the opposite. If they could place the river between them and their pursuers, they would be safe: could they do it?

The dusky horsemen were about a mile from the river when the first sight of them was obtained. Lieutenant Decker, who had forged slightly ahead of the rest, thundered up one of the numerous slopes, only a few feet in height, at the moment that the fugitives shot over the crest of a similar one. They were seen distinctly riding close together, and with their ponies at the highest speed.

“We are gaining!” shouted the lieutenant; “don’t spare your horses! we shall catch them!”

In truth the animals had not been spared from the first. It was cruel to push them thus, but the stakes warranted it. That little life was worth more than the lives of any multitude of mustangs.

The fact that the whites had gained up to this time was ground for belief they would continue to do so, and much ought to be done before the stream was reached.

Hardly a word was exchanged, except now and then, between the lieutenant and Mr. Freeman. Peyser, Colgate and Redfield kept their ponies at the high pace, while they sat grimly in their saddles leaning forward to catch the earliest sight possible of the fugitives. Mendez rode his own mustang, a wiry little mare of coal black color, that was one of the hardiest and fleetest of her kind.

The White Mountain Apache kept a little to the left of the rest, as if he preferred the companionship of his thoughts to that of men. The speed of his animal lifted the coarse black hair, that generally dangled about his shoulders, and caused it to flutter in a gale, like the mane and tail of his steed. His stolid face was without pain, and it must be confessed that it was not pleasant to look upon. It was broad, with protruding cheek bones, the mouth was wide, and the nose was scarred and broken years before in some ugly affray of which he never spoke.

The American Indian always shows little muscular development, but those half-bare arms and legs were like tempered steel. Mendez, more than once, had trotted up the side of a mountain, for a quarter of a mile, and, when he stopped, his respiration was no faster than at starting. Many others of his people have done the same thing and can do it to-day.

He had ridden his mustang into the mountains as far as he could go, and when three days passed, with not a mouthful of food, he slew his pony,

devoured what he wanted, and then pushed on for three days more, without eating, during two of which he did not taste a drop of water.

And through all that period, the temperature during the day never sank below a hundred degrees. The swarthy foe whose trail he was following (and whom he ultimately bagged) did almost precisely the same thing, and the endurance of neither was greater than that of the majority of their people at this very hour.

Mendez rode without saddle, and his only bridle was a piece of lariat loosely looped about the neck of his mustang, just back of the head. There was little need of that, for he readily guided the movements of the animal by the touch of the hand or heel or his voice.

Whether the renegades to the southward had seen their pursuers before the latter caught sight of them cannot be known, but within the succeeding five minutes a most unpleasant truth became manifest: they were fully as well mounted as the whites. Lieutenant Decker muttered impatiently when the fact could no longer be ignored:

“Their outbreak and flight were no sudden impulse,” he concluded, “for had it been they could not have made such complete preparations. There are no better ponies in the country than those they are riding.”

Shortly after this decision was reached another unpleasant discovery broke upon the whites, or rather upon Mendez, for he was the first to notice

it, and told the rest in a few words of his broken English.

When first seen there were three of the flying Apaches, corresponding with the number that had fired the home and destroyed the family of Captain Murray. The second scrutiny of the band revealed the astonishing fact that there were now four, who were pushing desperately for the river.

Where in the name of all that was wonderful the fourth horseman had come from was beyond the understanding of the pursuers, unless a glimmer of the truth stole through the brain of Mendez. If so, he kept it to himself.

The first thought of the lieutenant and Freeman was that the lifeless warrior, which the Apaches were bearing away, had been set upon a pony, and so fixed that he could keep upright during the flight ; but to do that an additional animal was necessary, and his sudden appearance was as amazing as that of his rider.

The most probable theory was that the new reinforcement had been waiting somewhere along the line of flight, and fell into line when the proper time arrived ; but the disquieting conviction could not be avoided that Maroz and Ceballos had not only made deliberate preparations for their crimes, but had more allies than at first was suspected.

All this was bad enough, but still worse was to come.

Lieutenant Decker shook his head :

“ There’s no stopping them ; they’ll cross the river

in the face of all we can do; they must be followed into the mountains, and by that time there is likely to be a dozen of them together."

Freeman made no answer, for he had none to make, but he observed that the officer now abated the killing pace of his horse. Since it was impossible to overtake the Apaches in a fair pursuit, and there was no possible way of preventing them from crossing the river, it was cruel to hold the animals at such exhausting speed.

Sure enough, when the horsemen struck the northern bank of the stream, the others were emerging on the southern shore. Their animals had swam most of the way, for the river was deep. The enemies were now in plainer sight of each other than ever.

Reining up his horse, Lieutenant Decker leveled his glass and studied the Apaches with the utmost care during the few minutes the opportunity presented. He had no difficulty in identifying Maroz and Ceballos, who, halting their ponies in plain sight, made tantalizing gestures and uttered defiant shouts in a mixture of Apache and English.

The other bucks were strangers to the officer, though he was quite sure he had seen one of them at the fort. It was the latter who still supported the body of his fallen friend on his horse, as if resolved that it should not fall into the hands of their pursuers.

Maroz held young Fulton Freeman on the mustang in front of him. Not only that, but he raised

the lad, and steadied him on his feet, so as so make sure his friends saw him. The boy stared wonderingly across the river, as if searching for some one whom he knew. He would have recognized his father had not the latter shrank behind the lieutenant.

"Don't move," he said to the officer in a husky voice ; "I can't stand it if he sees and calls to me. Tell me when he is gone!"

The strong man bowed his head, while the others silently watched the scene on the other shore.

In reply to the taunts of Maroz and his companions, the lieutenant now called back, that if they would return to the reservation, restoring their prisoner unharmed to his friends, and would promise henceforth to be good Indians, they should not suffer for what they had already done.

The answer to this offer was so insulting that the officer ground his teeth, and prayed that he might once get within arm's reach of the miscreant before the business ended. Possibly, had the Apaches been checked in their flight before reaching the river, they might have accepted the offer ; but then, had such good fortune befallen the pursuers, it is unlikely the offer would have been made, unless necessary to save the life of the young prisoner.

Having scorned the olive branch, Maroz and Ceballos emphasized the refusal by deliberately firing a couple of shots at their pursuers, the bullets whistling uncomfortably near their ears. Then, to show how much they despised the soldiers, they

rode away at a walk, instead of dashing off at full speed.

The strongest proof that Lieutenant Decker could give to Maurice Freeman of his self-restraint was when he forbade any of his men to return the fire. The conclusion was fair that one or more of the hostiles could be hit, for there was not a poor marksman in the party ; but little Fulton Freeman was as likely to be struck as they, and, if not, his captors would show their characteristic enmity against him.

“ You can look up now, Freeman ! ” said Decker to the parent, sitting motionless and with bowed head behind him.

The father did so, without a word, and observed the Apaches riding off, Maroz and Ceballos bearing to the left, while the other two, with their inanimate burden, trended to the right. The fugitives had split into two equal divisions, which, if they continued to diverge, must soon lose sight of each other.

The most direct course for the pursuers was to ride into the water and follow the fugitives, but the lieutenant hesitated.

“ They expect us to do it,” said he, consulting with his companions, as was his custom, at a perplexing point.

“ Then why not do it ? ” asked Budge Colgate.

“ Because we can gain nothing and may lose a great deal. I would give all I have, which isn’t much, for a chance at them, but this is a case where we must try their own tactics : we must hide our

plan of campaign from them, if it can possibly be done.”

“What method do you propose?”

“We'll turn back and ride off, as if we had given up a useless task, or have started after reinforcements. The Apaches will vote us sensible men for doing so. Then we must manage to get to the other side without discovery, and with the help of Mendez will try to track them to their hiding place.”

A comparison of views showed a unanimous agreement that this was the best course to follow. Mendez, to whom the others looked with special confidence, nodded his head several times and told them nothing else would do. They would probably have to wait until night before setting out in earnest, but that was far better than to swim the river, when sure of being seen.

To emphasize his words, the dusky scout now pointed across the stream and uttered the single exclamation :

“See dere!”

All eyes followed the direction of the extended finger and their hearts sank at what met their gaze.

“The very thing I have been dreading from the start!” was the disappointed exclamation of Lieutenant Decker.

CHAPTER XIX.

A N A P A C H E S I G N A L.

WHEN Mendez, the White Mountain Apache, who was acting as guide for Lieutenant Decker and his men, pointed across the Gila, it was not at the fugitives, for they had disappeared from view several minutes before, but at a point some distance to the right of the route taken by Maroz and Ceballos.

From a spot among the foothills of the Apache range, that was several hundred feet higher than the river, and where the rocks, boulders and pines offered secure shelter, a wavy column of smoke was ascending. It was so thin that, as it climbed slowly upward, with the towering mountains beyond serving as a background, it was perceptible only to the keenest vision. It was fully dissipated before reaching a point that would bring it in relief against the clear sky, above the mountain crest. More than likely that but for the searching scrutiny of Mendez the others would not have discovered it at all.

Beyond question the column of smoke was intended as a signal for the hostiles who had crossed the river but a short time previous. It proved that

they had allies already among the mountains, and that between them and themselves a perfect understanding existed. No doubt could remain that the outbreak was more serious than at first supposed, and instead of having three or four renegades to run down, there was likely to be double or triple that number, with the prospect of another of those long, exhausting campaigns under the sun of Arizona, in which the innocent would suffer tenfold more than the guilty.

Lieutenant Decker was so well convinced of the serious task before him that he adopted a radical change of plan. Even though he should succeed in tracing the hostiles to their hiding place in the mountains, his force was too small to strike them an effective blow. He decided to return to camp and report to the colonel, that no time might be lost in organizing a movement that would bring the Indians to terms, always provided the opportunity could be secured for doing so.

This meant a long halt in the pursuit, which to the father was unbearable. He could not remain idle during the long, sultry hours, when his child was in the possession of the band, who certainly meant him no good. He must keep moving or he would lose his self-control.

Declining, therefore, the invitation of the officer to accompany them on their return to the post, and thanking him for what he had already done, he turned the head of his mustang toward home, and struck an easy, swinging gait, while they rode westward to Fort Reno.

But Freeman had no purpose of returning to his desolate wife and child until he could gather decisive tidings of his boy, whether good or bad. After reaching a point where the intervening undulations of land were likely to shut him from the sight of any watchful Apaches, he changed his course, making it parallel with the river, spurred his pony to greater speed, and finally returned to the stream at a point more than a mile east of where he had parted from the lieutenant and his little company.

He was familiar with that part of the country, and without losing any time he rode into the water and headed for the southern shore. The river was narrower than below, but it was deep, and his mustang was forced to swim most of the way ; but the bath was as welcome to him as to his rider. Though both emerged dripping wet, it mattered naught under the smiting rays of the sun.

Once across, Freeman felt that he had fairly entered upon his important task. Disquieted as he was by his grief, he was too old a campaigner to lose his head, no matter how critical the emergency. He had set out to locate the Apaches who held his boy, and then, if no possible means of rescuing him presented itself, he would give his knowledge to friends who would be only too ready to help him.

It is impossible to exaggerate the difficulty of the work thus laid out for himself. It brought him in direct conflict with the subtlety of the worst of all

American tribes, and upon what may be called their own ground. His chances of success were hardly one in a hundred.

But, despite the discouraging outlook, the parent was buoyed up by a fact, and by a theory which he had persuaded himself to believe was also a fact. During his two years in Southern Arizona he had become familiar with much of the Apache Range, and especially with that portion he now meant to visit. He was quite confident that he knew where the little company would make their first halt of any duration ; and instead, therefore, of attempting to follow their trail, he proposed to make directly for the rendezvous.

There was more than one advantage in adopting this course, chief of which was that it involved far less risk to himself. The fugitives would watch their own trail and be prepared to ambuscade any of their pursuers who tried to follow it, while, by taking another route to the rendezvous, he was sure to escape that peril. This, however, as will be seen, hinged on the question whether or not he had made a mistake in locating Maroz, Ceballos, and such of their companions as they might have gathered round them. That remained to be proved by actual test.

The theory that did much to buoy up Freeman was the rather fanciful one that the Apaches were holding his child as a hostage for certain unlawful deeds not yet committed. They had been offered immunity for the crimes of the morning, and had

scoffed at the offer. With the opportunity of striking their enemies hard, they could not surrender before doing so. They must give full vent to their viciousness as preliminary to settling down to become good Indians. When the time came, and they were ready to yield, they would have the advantage of giving the authorities the alternative of accepting their submission, with the restoration of the child unharmed, or of consenting to its death by refusing their terms.

This was the theory, and as I have said, it was a fanciful one, which Freeman did not mention to the lieutenant, through fear that he would shake his head and declare it could have no possible existence in fact. He had managed to make himself believe it, and it nerved his arm to the attempt that otherwise would have been the height of folly.

The solitary pursuer had not penetrated far among the foothills, when, as he anticipated, a point was reached where his pony could be of no further use to him. Accordingly he dismounted, removed the saddle and bridle and turned him loose, to wander at will, until he should come back to claim him.

From the point where he left his animal to where he believed the Apaches were gathered was hardly a mile, but the distance was traversed with such extreme care, that the long, hot afternoon was drawing to a close before he was near his destination. Well aware that the slightest mistake on his part would be fatal, he determined to make none, if

patience, caution and circumspection could prevent it.

That stealthy advance among the stunted vegetation, over and around vast rocks, down declivities, gullies and gorges, through hollows and ravines and up abrupt slopes, was enough to try the endurance and nerve of the bravest man. His vision was so circumscribed that he often failed to see a dozen feet in advance, and he never caught sight of a boulder or rock, that he did not ask himself whether one or more of his enemies was not kneeling behind it, with leveled Winchester, awaiting just such an opportunity to bring him down.

He could no longer detect anything of the signal fire that was the means of bringing him thither, and he believed it had been extinguished ; but when he was congratulating himself on his success, he was startled to find that, without any thought on his part, he had struck the trail of Maroz and Ceballos. There were the hoofprints of their unshod ponies, distinctly marked, where they had borne their riders up the steep slope, and probably for a goodly distance beyond, before they were discarded.

The path showed so plainly that it would have been easy to follow it ; but, instead of doing so, he hastily crossed it and made his own course to the supposed rendezvous more circuitous than before.

But if this discovery was alarming, it was not to be compared to that which followed within the next fifteen minutes.

The settler had crossed another of those na-ov

gorges that were continually interposing, and was guardedly picking his way up the opposite side when, without the first warning, he observed an Apache warrior less than fifty feet distant.

He was seated on the ground, with his back against a dwarfed pine, his position such that his side was turned toward the white man, whom he did not see. This was the more remarkable, since, with all the care the latter might use, he could not avoid a slight noise in his movements which ought to have reached the ears of an enemy at double the distance.

Hardly repressing a gasp of amazement, Freeman brought his Winchester to his shoulder, and covered the warrior in the twinkling of an eye. No matter how catlike the fellow might be in his actions, he was now at a fatal disadvantage ; the white man had the drop on him.

Freeman, however, did not pull trigger. He feared the consequences when the report should ring through the solitude, for of necessity it must reach the ears of others near at hand.

Still the Apache did not stir, even though the settler purposely made a noise with one of his feet.

“ He is either asleep or is sunk in a deeper reverie than I ever knew an Indian to be.”

Neither of these suppositions was satisfactory. Freeman now coughed quite loudly, but with no more effect upon the warrior than before. Then the settler lowered his rifle, for he knew the truth.

Glancing around to make sure that no one was in sight, Freeman walked forward, holding his gun ready for instant use. The Apache's head was bowed on his breast as if asleep, but his continued quiescence could be accounted for only in one way ; he was dead.

Such was the fact. The weapon in the grasp of Maurice Freeman was the one that had brought him low, but it was aimed and fired by the wife when defending her home against the marauders. This was the warrior whose body had been carried among the foothills by his friends, until, believing it was beyond danger of being found by the whites, they had left it behind.

“ Ah, if Molly had only used two more cartridges with equal effect what a blessed thing it would have been !” mused the settler, as he glanced at the figure, “ it would have saved Captain Murray and his family, and it would have saved, too, my little boy.”

This discovery was significant. The other Apaches had been there at some time during the day, and probably were still in the neighborhood. The spot fixed upon by Freeman as the one likely to be the rendezvous was not far off, and he felt more certain than before that he was right in the belief that led him to make this venture.

But with every rod's advance the situation grew more critical. No matter where the Apaches might have grouped themselves, they were on the alert for the pursuit that they knew would be

quickly made by the soldiers. Indeed, so vigilant are these dusky miscreants that it may be said there is only one brief period out of the whole twenty-four hours when there is a possibility of surprising them. That is a short time before daylight. They are wide awake through the day and most of the night, but if the most careful reconnoitering shows them no sign of their enemies, they are apt to succumb to drowsiness as daybreak approaches.

By what has been said is not meant that an Apache camp is unapproachable except at the period named, but I know of no instance in which a large band has been surprised by pursuing cavalry, except in the dismal hours between three o'clock and the morning.

Should Freeman succeed in locating Maroz and Ceballos, and possibly several others, it might well be asked in what way he would be better situated than when on the northern shore of the river? What could a single man hope to do against several warriors who held his child captive?

Nothing in a direct way. But, having located them, and learned that his boy was alive, he would hasten to Lieutenant Decker and leave him to decide upon the plan to follow.

Although but a comparatively slight distance from the river, he was in one of the wildest portions of the foothills of the Apache Mountains. But for this the Indians would not have dared to halt before penetrating further. As it was they

felt as secure as if in the very heart of the range, for nothing was to prevent them from withdrawing still more whenever they chose.

Freeman had not gone far when the conviction forced itself upon him that he was dangerously near the Apache camp. True he had not seen nor heard anything to show this, but it may be said "it was in the air." He felt no doubt of it.

The ground sloped in its irregular way at an angle of almost forty-five degrees. The dwarf pine was abundant, wherever its hardy roots could find room to draw nourishment from the ground, which had been baked under the sun's rays ; the rocks and boulders were as numerous as ever, and, as Freeman came to a halt and glanced around, he thought :

"They must have abandoned their ponies before reaching this camp. A mountain goat could hardly keep his footing."

While the settler stood motionless, debating whether to venture any further before darkness, he was startled by a faint, tremulous whistle which came from some point in advance. It was so soft and musical that he would not have noticed it at any other time.

"That's an Apache," was his thought ; "and I would give much to know what it means. He isn't far off either."

If the call was a signal, it was likely to bring a reply, but, though he listened intently, he heard none.

"It might have been a bird ; I would believe so

if I were anywhere else, or this was another time, but things are becoming too ticklish for comfort."

He took several steps forward, not with the intention of searching further for the camp, but to utilize a gray, massive rock which bulged a dozen feet above the ground. He would not be quite so conspicuous under its shadow as when standing in the more open space.

It was a proof of the power of the sun in that latitude that, when Freeman placed his hand against the mass of stone, he quickly drew it back, because of the heat still in the rock. He had noticed the same thing on his way thither when he came in contact with other solid substances, but this was a little more pronounced. However, it was a small matter and he gave it no thought.

The slight additional sense of security was quickly dissipated by again hearing the signal that he had noticed a few minutes before. The trained ear could not have detected any variation, and he would have been certain that it issued from the same dusky lips, but for the change in the direction of the point whence it came.

At first it sounded exactly in front, as he faced the mountains, but the second time it was well round to his right. True, an Indian could have readily shifted his position from one point to the other during the interval, but Freeman believed more than one was concerned in the business.

Whether or not such was the fact, the conclusion was inevitable that he had placed himself in a most

perilous situation. The Apaches could outmaneuver him, and, if they once suspected his presence, there was no possibility of extricating himself.

His shuddering dread was that, despite the care he had exercised, Maroz and Ceballos had already learned the truth and were seeking at that moment to shut off all chance of his eluding them. He believed that those soft, birdlike calls referred to *him*.

No one could question the bravery of Maurice Freeman, but he would have given a good deal, just then, could he have been whisked to any point, a half mile distant, no matter in what direction. He knew he had essayed a task beyond his power and utter overthrow and disaster were near at hand.

While the Apaches might try to use the child as a hostage, it was not to be expected that they would attempt anything of that nature with the parent. He would be served as was poor Captain Murray, and his enemies would hold the same coign of advantage as before.

Be that as it may, it was self-evident that he must lose no time in falling back and wait for darkness before venturing nearer to the camp. Without any delay, therefore, he assumed a crouching position and turned to retrace the steps that he never should have taken.

Before he had gone a rod, the signal again sounded. This time it was directly behind him as he had stood, when hiding behind the rock: in

other words, he was advancing straight toward it. One Apache, if not more, was in his path.

Freeman stopped short, and, without straightening up, glanced searchingly ahead. As he did so, he plainly saw the red man who had emitted the signal step from behind another rock in full view and but a few rods away.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.

MAURICE FREEMAN was withdrawing from his perilous position, when without the slightest warning an Apache warrior stepped from behind a rock a short way ahead and confronted him.

When it is stated that this individual held a Winchester in his right hand and carried it at his thigh, it will be conceded that his action was altogether contrary to that of his people under such circumstances; for it gave the white man a chance to bring his weapon to his shoulder by a lightning-like movement and to secure the "drop" on him—one of the most difficult of all feats to perform. But when it is added further, that the Apache belonged to the White Mountain branch of the tribe his conduct will be understood.

No sight could have been more welcome to Freeman, whose face lit up with pleasure at the discovery that, instead of an enemy, he had the best of friends at his elbow. He paused a moment, and then, with the whispered word, "*Mendez*," on his lips, moved toward him.

The dusky trailer did not speak, but raised his left hand as an appeal for caution; and beckoning

him to advance, turned away and resumed his walk with that catlike movement peculiar to his race and which was absolutely without noise.

Freeman understood what he meant ; the situation was too dangerous for him to hold, and must be changed without delay. He did his best to follow instructions, though he could not do so with the perfection of his guide. The latter continued the lead for fully two hundred yards and then halted, turned around and silently watched the white man's approach.

By this time the latter had lost the trepidation he felt, when the soft, bird-like signal reached him from different points of the compass. Wherever the Apache camp might be, he was now at a safe distance from it.

“I didn't expect to meet you, Mendez,” said the settler in a guarded undertone, “and I needn't tell you——”

“Be careful ; the trees and rocks have ears.”

It was Lieutenant Decker who uttered these warning words, as he stepped into view, very much as the scout had done a short time before. He smilingly extended his hand to his astonished friend, adding by way of explanation :

“You didn't expect either of us, but we are here all the same ; the fight which I looked for this morning was unavoidably postponed, but I am hopeful that I shan't be disappointed after all.”

“Why, lieutenant, I am pleased beyond expression, but you owe me an explanation of how this was brought about.”



Lieutenant Decker smilingly extended his hand to his astonished friend.
"You did not expect either of us, but we are here all the same."—Page 184.

—*The Young Scout.*

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“It was all due to *him*,” replied the officer, nodding his head toward the Apache, who did not open his lips, but stood, looking back over the route he had just traversed, as if watching for some expected form, or listening for a signal that had not yet been made.

“I suppose so, but that fact does not explain matters.”

“Mendez is not addicted to talking, but I think I learned more of his thoughts than any one else. When you parted from us this forenoon, I supposed you meant to go home and wait until night, before making any move to help your child, but that shrewd fellow read your intentions in your face and in your manner. He told me you meant to ride away from the river until out of our sight and then cross and take up the trail of Maroz and Ceballos. I would have followed you and protested against such foolhardiness, but knew it was useless.”

“He hit the truth,” remarked Freeman, with an admiring glance at their friend, whose attention seemed still drawn away from them and who showed no interest in the conversation.

“Instead of attempting to interfere with you, we rode fast to the fort and reported to the colonel; he had already learned the truth from the Indian scouts whom he had sent across the river some hours before. The indications were unmistakable that eight or ten hostiles were on the war path, and, unless prompt measures were taken, the number would be increased. The colonel isn’t the man to

hesitate at such times and he moved quickly. A number of our best men at the post, with three White Mountain Apaches, all well mounted and under Captain Shindle, who was a veteran at this business before I entered the Point, set out for the mountains."

"Where are they now?"

"All that I can say is that they are hard at it, but I have no knowledge of their precise location. The scouts who bore the tidings to the colonel were certain the rendezvous was fully a mile back of where we saw the signal smoke, and which was meant to mislead us more than to guide their allies. The captain will aim to get to the rear and to approach from the south. This will give him a chance to prevent the withdrawal of the bucks further into the mountains. They will not look for a movement of that kind, and unless their scouts have discovered his purpose, he has a fair prospect of circumventing them."

"But where are Colgate, Peyser, and Redfield?"

"With the captain; this is a private campaign of Mendez and myself, but we are willing to let you in as a partner on the ground floor."

"Nothing could suit me better, but, if the Apaches are so far off, why this extreme caution, and what chance is there of our doing anything to help my child?"

"I'll admit that the prospect isn't dazzling, but, if the theory on which Mendez is working proves correct, we shall have an opportunity to effect something."

“ What is his theory ?”

“ That Maroz and Ceballos are not far from this spot, while the main band is a mile beyond in the mountains. They are watching the trail, along which they expect the pursuit to be made, and will telegraph the fact in their own way the moment it is discovered to the main party. There may be others with the couple, but that is the game they are playing.”

“ If Mendez is right, what have they done with my boy ?”

“ He is with Maroz and Ceballos.”

“ Would they not be likely to place him in charge of the main band, so as to lessen the danger of his rescue.”

“ That would be *my* theory, but I suspect *he* thinks differently.”

“ I have as much faith as you in the woodcraft of Mendez, but I can’t accept *that* theory.”

Freeman would have been only too glad to believe as did the guide, but the doubt he uttered was that which would have come to any clear-headed man. If Maroz and Ceballos were acting as the rear guard of the hostiles, they could not afford to handicap themselves with the care of a prisoner, the possession of whom, it may be said, was the key to the situation.

If the boy were placed in charge of the stronger party, the two would be untrammelled in the crisis which they had every reason to believe was at hand. This was the situation, as it presented itself to Free-

man and Lieutenant Decker, but the latter's convincing remark was :

“It strikes me as mighty odd, but Mendez wouldn't believe what he does without the best of reasons.”

“Have you questioned him?”

“I have.”

“What did he say?”

“He told me it was none of my business : not exactly in those words,” added the smiling officer, “but his refusal to enlighten me amounted to the same thing.”

Freeman turned toward the subject of their conversation, but he was so absorbed in watching a point to his left, and listening for that which he heard not, that the remarks seemed to be lost upon him.

“Let me ask how near we are to the spot where Mendez suspects Maroz and Ceballos to be.”

The lieutenant had put the same question to the guide before coming upon the settler, and he answered :

“Not more than a quarter of a mile.”

“A quarter of a mile!” repeated the astonished Freeman, “why I was sure I was within a dozen rods of it.”

“Nothing is easier than to be mistaken.”

It is singular how the emotion of mirth will intrude at the most inopportune times. Maurice Freeman was oppressed by a grief such as he had never known before, but he now laughed silently

and heartily. He recalled his extreme trepidation, when he believed he was near the Apache camp, his effort to withdraw and the caution of Mendez in guiding him away. To him the picture was that of a big urchin, who has ignorantly approached some danger, and whose father seeks to coax him back to safety. The figure of himself playing the part of booby was what caused him to laugh, but his mirth quickly vanished, and he wondered at himself for having shown it.

“If such care must be used when we are so far from the camp, how will it be when we get within sight of it?”

The lieutenant shook his head.

“I’m afraid there isn’t much show for making that test; I have been pleading with Mendez to take me in as a full partner and to allow me to be at his elbow when the first squint of the camp is obtained, but my eloquence was wasted. The fact is,” continued the young officer, becoming serious, “he is right. I don’t believe the white man lives who can steal up to an Apache camp in the day-time, or during the early part of the evening, no matter how dark, without discovery, and I needn’t tell you what *that* means for you and me. After midnight, when they are asleep, there might be a show, but even then Mendez must be in the advance. He expected to find you somewhere in this neighborhood, and you have been as much an object of search for the last hour or two as the hostiles themselves.”

“What was his purpose in signaling from different points, when he located me?”

“I presume to give you a good scare.”

“Well, he succeeded! I was never so rattled in all my life. But I was quite near the place where I expected to find Maroz and Ceballos.”

“That may be, but you were away off in your calculations; you made a mistake; I have done something of the kind once or twice during my checkered career.”

While the conversation continued in this vein, generally serious, but now and then lightened by the bubbling humor of the lieutenant, darkness settled about them. This was most welcome, for it brought nearer the hour for action. Between the downsetting and uprising of the sun, the all-important question must be settled as to what was to be the fate of little Fulton Freeman.

The father and the lieutenant talked several minutes longer, while their forms grew indistinct in the gloom, until a remark of the officer caused the other to turn his head toward Mendez. He had vanished.

“What’s become of him?” whispered Freeman, as if his absence indicated some new peril at hand.

“He’s gone to take a look at things; he moved away fifteen minutes ago.”

“I didn’t hear him.”

“Nor did I, but I saw him, just as you have seen the shadow of a cloud whisk over the earth. Of course, there is no saying when he will be back,

since that depends on what he learns, but we can count on his being here before daylight."

"And in the meantime we have nothing to do but to wait."

"You hit it that time, and we can't find more comfortable quarters than these."

It would not do to go far from the spot, since it might cause Mendez trouble in finding them, beside which there was no object in doing so, since one part of the mountain differed little from another. Accordingly, they assumed lolling postures on the nearest rock, which was still warm from the rays of the sun, and continued their conversation in tones that could not have been heard more than a dozen feet away.

Freeman had eaten nothing since morning, and the thought of food had not been with him; but when the lieutenant produced a small, substantial lunch, which he was thoughtful enough to bring, the two shared it and were refreshed therefrom.

"Now, if I had a drink of water," said the elder, "I would be satisfied; it seems to me I never felt more thirsty, but I can manage to stand it until morning."

"There's no need of that; a stream is within a hundred feet of us. It doesn't amount to much, and is as warm as dishwater, but it is a thousand per cent. better than thirst."

The lieutenant located the spot for his friend, proposing that they should go thither separately, in order that one of them might be sure of being on

hand when Mendez returned. But the scout had been absent so short a time that this precaution seemed useless, and, when Freeman asked him to show him the way, he complied willingly.

The night had a gibbous moon, and, as the sky was without a cloud, considerable light reached the earth, where the rays were not obstructed. The vegetable growth in this portion of the Apache range is sparse, the small trees being scattered, so that it was easy to pick their way for the short distance necessary to reach the water.

As the lieutenant had intimated, the draught was uninviting to one not very thirsty. The rivulet issued from under the roots of a tree, where it was to be supposed it would be quite cool, but it was lukewarm and roiled, as the officer learned when he quenched his thirst during the afternoon, but the drink was none the less refreshing on that account.

“Freeman,” said the lieutenant, looking around them, as if suspecting the presence of an enemy in their vicinity, “suppose you wait here for a few minutes, while I go back to the old spot.”

“Why do you propose that?”

“I fancied just now I heard something suspicious. Maybe I was mistaken, but when you are in this confounded Apache country, the rule is to believe every man guilty until proved innocent.”

“And if you were not mistaken?”

“Well,” replied the young officer in his off-hand way, “it’s likely in that case that there will be music in the air.”

"I mean as to what *I* shall do. Am I to stand here and take no part in the business? Is that your idea of how one comrade should stand by another?"

The question may seem trifling, but it perplexed the lieutenant for the moment. The idea of comradeship with him, as it is with every true soldier, is that one shall stand by his friend to the death. The basest crime that a soldier can commit is to desert a comrade in extremity. Ordinarily, therefore, the answer of Decker would have been prompt, or rather there would have been no occasion for asking the question, but while Freeman was a brave man, his powers of keen, subtle reasoning, of cool-headedness and quick resources were affected by his mental distress over the peril and uncertainty about his little boy. It is the rule among physicians for no member of the profession to attend unaided his own family (unless the peril make it unavoidable), since affection must weaken the judgment. The situation of the father was somewhat analogous.

In other words the thought of the lieutenant was that it would be safer for them to be apart, if danger should come. The elder not only could not aid the younger, but would increase his own peril. He must, therefore, stay where he was.

"I wish you would remain here until I signal for you to join me. It may be that if there is anything of the kind in the air, it will be best to let it alone, and there is more chance of that with one of us

than with both. If I find myself in need of you I will call."

Freeman could make no objection to this, and he sat down in the stunted undergrowth near the spring, reflecting that with the fervid heat he was likely to feel a renewal of thirst every fifteen minutes or less, and was favorably located for quenching the same without any trying delay.

"Listen for the signal," whispered the lieutenant again, "and don't join me until you hear it. I will make it as soon as I am convinced the way is clear."

The space between the spring and the rock where they meant to await the return of Mendez was but little more than a hundred yards. It was broken by boulders, a number of depressions, with here and there a dwarf pine, one of those sturdy trees which seem to have the power of the moss to extract the needed nourishment where most plants would die for lack of it. Though the moon was almost overhead, it was impossible for either of the men to discern objects for a third of the distance which separated them. The lieutenant had not taken more than a dozen steps in his guarded manner, with his body in a crouching posture and all his senses alert, when the watchful Freeman was as much alone as if the nearest man were miles distant. The brave young officer was swallowed up in the gloom and gone.

"Now," thought the elder, finding himself alone, "the Apaches must know about this spring; those

people I suppose understand what hunger and thirst are, though they have less trouble from it than any persons I ever met, and it isn't impossible that some of them may take a notion to drink from the same spring. That being the case, the prudent thing for me to do is to imbibe freely while I have the chance."

Having drank deeply only a few minutes before, Freeman felt as if he must make excuse to his conscience for his dissipation, but the water was delicious and the supply all-sufficient. He quaffed his fill, and then replacing his hat stole softly from the spot and assumed a crouching posture behind a convenient boulder, where there was little likelihood of an enemy stealing upon him unawares.

"The lieutenant is full of pluck," he reflected, "but the pluckiest man that ever lived sometimes needs the help of a child. There isn't anything he wouldn't do for me, and I will stand by him to the last extremity."

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Decker was alert and guarded in every step he took. His principle that while in the Apache country every indication of possible danger, no matter how slight, should be accepted as the reality, was the right principle. Its disregard has brought death to many a brave soldier on the frontier. Lieutenant Decker welcomed a lively brush with the hostiles, but he would have been the idiot which he was not, to disregard the experience of those that had fought these fierce people before he was born, while brief as was his

own experience, its lesson was too impressive to be forgotten.

For perhaps a fourth of the distance he advanced almost on his hands and knees, stealing from boulder to boulder, at times almost flat on his face, then raising his head, peering here and there, looking and listening with the utmost keenness at his command.

“There is no wind blowing though I heard a rustle once or twice ; I don’t think there has been enough to move a leaf for the last half hour. Now and then we meet wild animals in this part of the world, but that slight noise—if there *was* a noise—wasn’t made by any of them. It looks as if some of the Apaches are hereabouts.”

Perhaps a veteran scout would have argued that, inasmuch as the young officer had heard a noise—slight though it was—the fact was against its having been made by one of the dreaded red men, since none of them would commit a blunder of that nature, when in the neighborhood of an enemy, but it might be they did not think any enemy was near, so it was wise for the lieutenant to proceed on the theory that some of Geronimo’s followers were prowling in the vicinity.

For a period of ten minutes the young officer held his place immovable. During that time the oppressive silence was unbroken by the slightest disturbance. Everything seemed absolutely “dead” around him, the atmosphere itself being as pulseless as the warm rocks and boulders on which he rested

his hand, as he glided near them. Certain that he had not made the least betrayal, the lieutenant began to ask himself whether he had not been mistaken from the first in his suspicions.

With his head so near the ground, he lay flat, and pressed his ear against the earth, as do hunters and scouts when in the vicinity of enemies. At the moment of resorting to this test, the ear told something faintly, but it was gone at the moment he composed himself to listen—a fact which made it seem that the noise was caused by the first contact of his own ear with the ground.

“Everything seems to be all right,” he reflected, finally resuming his advance to the spot where he and Freeman had settled down to await the return of their dusky friend.

A rod further and Decker was checked by a rock that must have weighed several tons. He could pass it by turning to the right or left or climbing over it. It need not be said that the last method was to be used only as a final resort. He paused once more and considered on which side it was best to flank it—a question which it would seem could not be settled by an hour’s deliberation, but there is no accounting for the impressions which sometimes sway persons in perilous emergencies. The lieutenant was cautiously creeping to the left, and had turned the corner, when he abruptly retreated and headed to the right.

Advancing in this Apache-like style, he held the Winchester which he carried with him in his left

hand, both hands and knees being used to aid his progress, while he peered ahead in the gloom and listened with the intensity he had shown from the first. The configuration of the rock and the position of the moon (not exactly in the zenith), threw a line of shadow to the right of the immense boulder just far enough to enfold his figure. On the other side there was not a particle of shade, so that his change of advance had brought that much advantage to him.

From the corner of the rock around which he had just crept, to the corresponding edge, was little more than twelve feet, and half the distance was passed, when the very peril against which he was maneuvering presented itself. Beyond the further corner appeared the head of an Apache warrior, thrust forward, seemingly with the slow, noiseless motion of the hand of a clock. He, too, was in a crouching posture, for the impish face, with its dangling mass of hair, was no more than a foot above the ground. It was partly in moonlight and partly in shadow, but shown so plainly that there could be no possible mistake.

Although the position of the lieutenant was the more favorable, the action of the hostile proved that he was as quick to detect him as the other was to observe his dusky foe. Before Decker could draw his revolver or bring his rifle into play, the head of the savage whisked from sight. It vanished so suddenly indeed as to suggest the figurehead of a wooden image that was snapped back by machinery.

The situation was growing interesting. Here were two deadly enemies within eight or ten feet of each other, both equally alive to the fact, both armed and ready to take instant advantage of any turn that might offer.

It cannot be said that Lieutenant Decker felt comfortable. He knew the cunning of these terrible red men, and would much rather fight them in the open or on ground where the chances of each were the same. This savage had been trained in the cunning and woodcraft of his people, and knew things which could not have come as yet to the white man. But the latter was quick of perception and was learning fast in the crucial school of experience.

In one sense, the two were on the same footing. They were within striking distance, with the rock between them, and he who was the first to discover the other, even for an instant, must win in the desperate game. It was, in fact, the question of which could "get the drop" on the other.

The Apache might come around the corner of the rock in front, or at the rear, or possibly he would try to steal over the top, so as to fire down on his enemy. If he could forestall the white man, by a moment, it would inevitably be fatal to the latter.

There is a stratagem as old as the hills and one with which doubtless every reader of these pages is familiar. Lieutenant Decker gently removed his hat and placed it on the muzzle of his rifle. Then creeping slightly forward, he extended the weapon, intending to make the hat show around the edge of

the boulder. It will be understood that the idea was to represent himself as peering beyond the edge, so as to draw the shot of the Apache, and then let fly at him before he could recover from the blunder.

The young man had almost reached the corner with the extended Winchester, when he withdrew it and replaced the hat on his head.

“If there were a law against persons making fools of themselves, I would violate it about every hour of the day,” was his thought. “I’m glad no one saw me.”

For, while reaching forward with one arm, he awakened to the fact that even if the stratagem was successful, it would not help him. Suppose the Apache sent a bullet through the hat, how could that aid the officer? The Indian would discover his mistake before Decker could bring his body to the same spot and fire—an act which would place him in exactly the same peril that the hat had encountered. Furthermore, more than likely the warrior owned a repeating Winchester. If so, the true course for him was to fire at the hat the instant it showed and give the impression that he had been tricked. That would encourage the white man to rush to the attack and bring to his foe the exact chance for which he was maneuvering and waiting. Consequently, this time-honored and once brilliant strategy would prove a boomerang that would recoil with disastrous effect upon the originator.

The momentous question remained as to the Apache's method of attack, for, whatever it was, it must be forestalled. The officer was obliged to watch the front and the rear, and make sure that his enemy did not glide over the top of the rock like a rattlesnake, and strike down from above.

Decker leaned his rifle against the face of the boulder and drew his revolver. The former weapon was too awkward to be used in the impending encounter. The smaller was equally effective and tenfold more handy.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK.

LIEUTENANT DECKER pressed his ear against the side of the rock and listened, hoping that his enemy would betray himself by coming in contact with the solid substance, but he was too cunning. He knew better than to act in that amateurish fashion.

It was the result of guesswork, rather than of reason, that the young man came to the belief that the warrior would steal around three-fourths of the boulder and come upon him from the rear. Accordingly he faced that way, revolver in hand, and ready for the emergency when it presented itself.

Reaching the corner, Decker paused, but with the uncomfortable feeling that, after all, he had committed a blunder and the Apache, divining his reasoning, would make his next essay from the front; but, since the whole business, for a time at least, must be conducted upon conjecture, he grimly held his ground.

During these critical moments, he did not forget the peril from above. He continually held his ear against the rock, believing that if the buck attempted to steal upon him from that direction, he

must inevitably betray himself by sound, which passes readily through a solid substance, and, hearing nothing of the kind, he concluded the essay was not yet made.

Now, nothing was clearer than that so long as matters remained thus, the peril was not only unchanged but impended as before. Who was to make the first advance, as may be said, into the enemy's territory?

The lieutenant might have been more patient, but for several contingencies which threatened to complicate the situation. Freeman was still at the spring; and although the understanding was that he was to remain there until signaled to come, it was probable that he would accept the long silence of his companion as proof that everything was right, and seek to rejoin him. Could he but know how matters stood, he would give the very help needed, but, not knowing it, was likely to run into a peril which would prove fatal to himself before his young friend could warn him or interfere in his behalf.

The other contingency was that the Apache might have one companion or more in the vicinity who would come to his assistance. Such a reinforcement would decide the singular contest at once and against the young man. The lesson of all this was that matters must be forced to an issue with the least possible delay.

The natural course of action for one in the officer's situation was to peer gradually round the edge of the rock to ascertain where his enemy was,

but no man, after second thought, would attempt anything of that nature, for, it will be seen, that it was only taking the place of the hat on the end of the gun barrel. The watchful Apache was certain to detect the insidious advance, and, before the eyes came into view, would send a bullet through the brain of the daring white man.

Accordingly Lieutenant Decker adopted the opposite course. He darted his head forward, gaining one glance along the end of the rock, and withdrawing again, before the most alert enemy could fire. It was the right course under the circumstances and proved effectual.

The moonlight struck that portion of the boulder with full effect, there being not even a ribbon of shadow, and, in full view was the Apache, advancing on hands and knees, his hideous face half-hidden by the strands of black hair which dangled about his shoulders and in front of his chest and features.

Could Decker have known this a moment before, he would have discharged his revolver at the instant of catching his glance, but to have known it was to possess a knowledge that was impossible.

The puzzling question with him was whether the warrior had seen him. He must be depending more on his sense of hearing than on sight, and it would seem that there was reason to believe he had not caught that shadowy thrusting forward and withdrawal of the head. If such were not the fact, he must be unaware of the exact location of the white man, who had only to repeat the maneuver, accompanying it by an instant discharge of his revolver.

But, suppose he had observed the shadowy movement—ay, there was the rub.

If he had failed to see it, he would continue his advance, and continuing it, must disclose some part of himself at the corner of the boulder. Accordingly, the lieutenant partly straightened up, sitting on his heels, weapon grasped, and eyes and ears wide open.

But the minutes passed and nothing was developed. It was impossible to decide what had been done or what should be the next step. Since, however, the former strategy had brought him knowledge and no harm, Decker now repeated it, holding his weapon, so that if the Apache were in his old position he could reach him with a bullet.

It was like a man darting his head through a trap door, and with one instant, all-embracing sweep of his vision, dropping out of sight before any observer could do more than recognize him.

The result was disappointing. The side of the rock was bare. The buck had discovered his peril and withdrawn. Where was he?

The lieutenant glanced behind him with a nervous start, half expecting to see the miscreant in the act of firing, but for the moment he was invisible, though somewhere close at hand.

Since the Apache was too cautious to be caught off his guard by this system of maneuvering, Lieutenant Decker asked himself what other method could be adopted. There must be a change in the order of proceedings, or he himself would be discomfited.

"I'll do it!" he muttered, compressing his lips.

No part of the rock was more than five feet in height, so that if a man stood upright beside it, his hat would show from any point. The stone was so rough that it was as easy to climb as a flight of stairs. The lieutenant's decision was to adopt the system of attack which he had held in so much dread from the first.

Sensible of the necessity of instant action and the great peril attending the recourse, he kept his revolver in his right hand, as he grasped the upper edge of the boulder, placed one foot upon an obstruction, and silently raised his head above the crest of the rock, intending to draw himself upon it.

His head and shoulders had just moved upward, when with a grasp he let go and dropped out of sight.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he exclaimed, "was there ever anything like it?"

Never did two enemies seem to follow so closely the same line of thought. It looked as if the Apache and the white man's brains were working in unison. Thus it came about that at the very moment Lieutenant Decker raised himself over one side of the rock to the top, the Apache did the same thing at a point opposite. Both were climbing to the coign of advantage at the same moment. Either could have let fly with his pistol (for the Apache had one), but instead of doing so he made all haste to drop down, so as to interpose the boulder as an armor in front.

Thus was another remarkable example given of a unity of thought.

Everything thus far done by one was duplicated by the other, and the two were once more crouching behind the rock, each debating with himself how best to end a situation, which, to say the least, was extraordinary in more than one respect.

Lieutenant Decker now resorted to a daring proceeding that was characteristic of the man. It has been said that boulders were all around him. Less than a rod to his right was another, perhaps half the size of the one he had been about to climb. Hesitating hardly a moment, he took several rapid steps, crouching low, and whisked behind the new shelter. Had the Apache suspected anything of the kind, he would have possessed a fatal advantage, for what better target can a man ask than a fleeing foe only a few yards away? But he could not know it, unless he happened to be peering around the rock at the critical moment, and he was not doing anything of that nature.

A creepy feeling came over the officer, during the moment he was gliding across the open space, such as a man feels who expects to hear the report of a weapon and feel the sting of a bullet. He flung himself behind the new shield with a feeling of inexpressible relief.

“By George!” he exclaimed, as he looked cautiously out; “I forgot my rifle!”

Sure enough, there it stood in plain sight, leaning against the big boulder, within easy reach of his enemy, should he attempt to seize it.

“But he can’t do it without giving me a chance to wing him,” muttered the officer, fully resolved to avert the catastrophe.

The one comforting fact about the situation was that the white man had improved matters and gained an unquestionable advantage. The Apache could not know of the change, and any attempt to locate his foe, without knowing he had left the immediate vicinity of the larger boulder, would expose the warrior to the shot that was awaiting him.

The new position of Decker gave him a view not only of the side where he had been crouching, but of the upper end, just as a person can see two sides of an oblong box from a certain point of view—a fact which it was not to be supposed was known to the warrior, who was, therefore, in danger of exposing himself to a shot from an unexpected quarter. Better still, he could not climb the rock without also showing himself and offering the fairest kind of a target.

All this tended to make the lieutenant much more comfortable, though the feeling would have been more marked could he have laid hand on the rifle.

“I wouldn’t be uneasy if sure he’s the only buck near, but if a second appears, and my gun is left there, they will have me foul—I’ll do it!”

All depended upon quickness and silence. In the same crouching posture, he darted across the intervening space, and was back again in a twinkling, with his gun in hand. The success of his reckless act thrilled him with pleasure.

“I haven’t been in this Apache country long,” he reflected, “but I think I have learned something. If that fellow gets the better of me, he’s smarter than I believe.”

But it was unwise to count on safety when peril impended. He was confronted by one of the most fearful of enemies, a member of a tribe whose exploits in cunning approach the marvelous. The most fatal thing the officer could do was to underestimate his enemy.

A dismal, disquieting question forced itself upon him: if he had effected so radical a change of base what was to prevent the Apache doing the same thing? What warrant had the white man for believing a scheme of that nature would present itself to him and not to the dusky marauder? What was to hinder his adopting the artifice?

The thought was like a wet blanket to Decker, who instead of keeping “eyes to the front,” began glancing to the right and left and behind him in quest of an insidious approach from that direction.

Nothing was seen, but the element lacking to make his situation intolerable came the next moment with the unmistakable noise—faint, but loud enough to him in his tense, nervous state to be heard plainly—made by a body gliding over the ground. Hardly had the conviction formed that it was his old enemy stealing a march upon him, when he saw his mistake. An immense rattlesnake, in its nocturnal wanderings, had been disturbed by his intrusion, and retreating a few feet, as if to gain a better point of

view, threw itself into coil, reared its head and gave its warning rattle.

It was nigh enough to reach the startled man with its venomous fangs, but before it could deliver its blow, he leaped beyond reach and leveled his revolver. There was sufficient moonlight and the distance was so slight that he could have shattered its head at the first fire, but, when about to press the trigger, he restrained himself.

The shot would betray his presence to the Apache, and not only put him on his guard, but give him the chance to serve the white man as the serpent had been treated.

"This is a lovely situation," muttered the lieutenant; "I like one about as well as the other, but I don't intend to let you have your own sweet way."

The latter was addressed to the rattler, a bite from which was fatal, but it could inflict no harm except by a closer approach. If it attempted to come nearer for the purpose of striking, the officer would blow its head off. He kept his eye on it. But the *crotalus* species is cowardly, and the serpent, finding itself not likely to be attacked, came out of its coil and glided off among the boulders and was seen no more.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

“Now,” said Lieutenant Decker, as the horrible serpent glided from sight in the gloom, “if you’ll pass round the end of that big rock over yonder and give that Apache your attention, I’ll forgive you for the way you scared me.”

As nearly as he could judge, the rattler was heading in the direction named, and the officer listened, hoping to hear favorable results, but the silence was unbroken, and, if the reptile passed near the warrior, there was no collision between them.

One of the uncomfortable facts connected with these fearsome pests is that when you come upon one in the desert or wilderness, you are likely to meet another or perhaps several of them. The species attain enormous size in New Mexico and Arizona, and a sting from one of them, though slower in its results than the bite of the cobra, is about as fatal. No man can contemplate the probability of coming upon a rattler unawares in the night without a shudder. While it was not likely that the reptile, seeing the crouching man, would attack him, yet such things have occurred and the lieutenant never allowed himself to forget the fact.

His chief concern, however, was with the "two-legged rattler" who, as matters stood, was tenfold more dangerous than the creeping one. Neither of the men had gained a shot at the other, but both were hopeful of doing so.

"It must be that in some way he has learned of my change of base. I can't understand how he got the knowledge, but if he thought I was still sneaking along the side of that boulder he would not content himself by waiting for me to come into range——"

Fortunate was it for Lieutenant Decker that he had made the change described, for, with the same unity of thought that was marvelous, the Apache had resorted to a similar artifice. Instead of confining himself to the big boulder, he had stolen back among the smaller ones, and wormed his way forward and around until he secured a position some twenty feet distant, which allowed him to scan the two sides of the boulder that had been under the eye of the white man for the last fifteen or twenty minutes.

What prevented the perfect success of the Apache, however, was the fact that he did not suspect his stratagem had been anticipated. He expected to find his enemy crouching along one of the sides of the boulder, waiting for the buck to reveal himself through some unguarded movement.

Failing to discover him at the first scrutiny, the Apache silently rose to a half-standing posture, and, with his head thrust forward, peered here and there

in search of the man whom he was eager to shoot on sight.

In this position his side was toward the officer, who laid down his revolver and brought his Winchester to the front, carefully sighting at the miscreant, who was not only hungry for his life, but had doubtless dyed his hands in the blood of many an innocent person. No one could have been more cautious than Lieutenant Decker, and yet, when he came to adjust his aim, he made the exasperating discovery that no Apache was in sight. He had vanished like the shadow of a passing cloud. It was hard to say what had caused his disappearance. It may have been due to the slight noise made by the white man in preparing to shoot, or his failure to discern him where he thought he was, may have told the startling truth with that lightning-like quickness which marks the trained warrior, and caused him to drop out of view and withdraw from the post of danger with the same celerity that had brought him to it.

Be that as it may, he was gone, and the problem seemed to revert to its status at the beginning. The two enemies were still maneuvering against each other, with no apparent advantage to either. The lieutenant, however, fancied he had a trifle the better of it, for the Apache did not know where to look for him, while he had a general knowledge of the other's location.

Now followed fifteen or twenty minutes of the most trying nature. During the interval, the lieu-

tenant neither saw nor heard anything that could give him the slightest clue to the other's whereabouts or his line of procedure. When the ignorance had continued that long, he began to suspect the warrior had left the place. He might have become convinced that it was too risky to attempt to outwit the white man, or he may have suspected he had a companion in the neighborhood, who was likely to appear at any moment and turn the scales against him.

This was a comforting theory, but the officer was too wise to trust his safety to it. It would have been in accord with the subtlety of the Apache to contribute to the delusion. The strained situation, however, could not last forever. Mendez was expected to arrive ere long, and he would be certain to bring a change. If the warrior was as shrewd as he appeared to be, he would find that instead of one man to contend against, he had two and possibly more.

This reasoning became so convincing at the end of fifteen minutes more that the lieutenant acted upon it. Withdrawing still further from the big boulder, he picked his way among the smaller ones until near the spot where he had seen the Apache rise to view and then drop out of sight again. He certainly was gone, but might be not far off. The lieutenant resumed his cautious circling of the huge boulder until he had passed entirely around it and come back to his starting point. This took considerable time and was accomplished with the

utmost skill and care, but he neither saw nor heard anything of his enemy.

"He has vamosed the ranch, of a certainty," was the gratifying conclusion of Decker, who felt a greater degree of security than had been his since the discovery of his peril. "At any rate, I'll signal to Freeman."

And he emitted the low, vibratory whistle, like the call of a nightbird. It could be heard but a short distance away, though capable of being made much louder and more penetrating.

"Freeman will be certain to hear it. He must be wondering at my delay and won't tarry in coming to me. It may be that the Apache is listening for something of the kind and will read its meaning. If he does he is welcome."

The officer compressed his lips and held himself ready for any demonstration from the dusky miscreant, who never would have given up his attempt on his life unless compelled to do so by a fear of his own safety. Glancing here, there and everywhere, the officer was prepared to fire the instant the opportunity presented, and was a trifle disappointed that it did not appear.

He had gone through too many perils, brief as was his service in the Southwest, to throw away any opportunity by impatience or carelessness. He repeated the signals several times, at intervals of a few minutes, and watched and listened for the reply from an enemy instead of his friend, but none came.

"The fellow has left, beyond a doubt," was the decision reached; "he has gone to join his companions and nothing further is to be feared from him. There's no saying, however, what some of the others may be doing."

The distance to the spring was short. The lieutenant showed the effects of the heat by lying down on his face and taking another deep draught of the tepid water, after which he donned his hat and looked around in the gloom.

"Since the Apaches must know of this supply, I shouldn't be surprised, if some of them came here to quench their thirst, which being so, I'll locate a few paces from it. What the mischief can be the matter with Freeman?" he asked himself, with a feeling of vague uneasiness; "I thought he would be quick to respond to my call, but he hasn't even answered it."

It was well that Decker took the precaution of withdrawing from the spring and ensconcing himself among the surrounding boulders, where he could peep forth, and, by the exercise of a little precaution, see without being seen.

He had hardly taken this position when he caught the sound of footsteps and the murmur of voices. In the stillness he plainly heard the words spoken. Their surly, guttural tones, the very few sentences uttered, and the fact that he could not understand a syllable, were proof that the new arrivals were his old enemies, the Apaches. The carelessness displayed by them was proof also that they had no suspicion of the presence of any whites near.

When anything of the kind is apprehended, the cunning and caution of those red men cannot be surpassed. It is almost impossible to approach them undetected, and they never indulge in the carelessness shown in this instance.

Just before reaching the spring, they passed over a spot where the moonlight struck them. There were three, dressed and accoutered like the members of the band that had wrought such sad havoc during the past day or two.

They took turns in kneeling down and quaffing from the spring, after which they rose to their feet, and stood grouped together in plain sight of the officer, who was stealthily watching them. One of them appeared to hold his peace, while the others exchanged views upon some matter that interested all.

“The next thing I must do,” thought the listener, “is to take lessons in the beautiful Apache language. I may persuade Geronimo to give me instruction, but, before he did that, he himself ought to have a few lessons in other matters.”

Nothing would have been easier than to shoot one, and perhaps all, from where the lieutenant was hiding. The distance was short, and the wretches deserved no mercy. Had Freeman been with him, it is more than probable that the two would have opened fire upon them with destructive results.

“If they’ll only be obliging enough to stand in a row,” mused the officer, struggling against the temptation, “I would let them have a broadside,

but the instant I dropped one the others would be off."

Prudence demanded that he should leave them undisturbed. The sole purpose of this remarkable expedition was to recover the lost child. To make an attack on the group, without the certainty of annihilating the whole three, would apprise the Apaches of what was on foot and inevitably defeat it. Besides, there was no telling what had become of Freeman. He, too, was likely to become involved, with disastrous consequences to himself. The occasion was unquestionably one for the exercise of self-control.

And Lieutenant Decker exercised it. He held himself motionless, with his trusty Winchester in his ready grasp, and with a strong yearning to try his skill upon the miscreants who knew no such quality as mercy.

The three warriors stood in plain view for fully ten minutes. Then they walked deliberately away, taking the opposite course from that leading to the rock where the two white men had arranged to await the return of Mendez with word of the stolen child of Freeman.

The officer kept his position for several minutes after the disappearance of the trio. There was no probability of their coming back, after quenching their thirst, but he meant to make sure they were beyond hearing before he moved.

He was uneasy over the silence of Freeman, and what he had just witnessed increased his misgivings.

If these warriors made this visit, it was not unlikely that others had done the same before them. Coming upon the white man suddenly, nothing was more certain than a fatal collision, and yet it would seem that if anything of the kind had occurred, there must have been a shot, an outcry or some kind of noise which assuredly would have been heard by the lieutenant a short distance away.

But it might have been otherwise. They may have been more guarded than the last, and, stealing up to the spring, discovered the presence of the white man. In that case, they could have crept forward unawares and despatched him without any disturbance that could have been heard twenty feet away.

“I hope this suspense will soon be over. It doesn’t seem to me that there’s much chance of Freeman getting his little fellow back, even with the aid of the matchless Mendez, and now it begins to look as if it had gone ill with him. What a blow to the wife and mother, and yet how many similar ones have been struck in the Southwest!”

The lieutenant now resorted to signaling again, listening with a painful throbbing of the heart for the reply which came not.

“Something is wrong,” was his conclusion; “the poor fellow may have grown impatient with waiting and started off on a hunt of his own. If he has attempted anything of that kind, it is the end of the business so far as *he* is concerned. I should not have left him alone— Sh !”

At that instant he was thrilled by a peculiar sound. It was not a signal or spoken word, but the low, moaning outcry made by a person in the depth of distress or great suffering.

“It’s Freeman,” whispered the lieutenant; “and some grievous ill has befallen him! He is not far off; what can it mean?”

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT BEFELL MAURICE FREEMAN.

It will not be denied that a most memorable experience befell Lieutenant James Decker, and yet what shall be said of that which came to Maurice Freeman, whom he left beside the spring, while he went forward to reconnoiter?

After taking his second deep draught of water, he walked aside, as will be remembered, being impelled thereto by the same distrust that led the young officer some time later to hide himself while the three Apaches came forward to quench their thirst.

“I understand his action,” reflected the father; “he distrusts my judgment; he believes I am so upset by my affliction that I would run blindly into danger; but he is mistaken. Heaven knows that I have suffered and am still tortured by anxiety for my little boy, but I know better than to make his peril greater by any recklessness on my part.

“I would be offended if it were any one except Lieutenant Decker, but who can be offended with him?” asked the captain, with a glow of admiring gratitude; “he has risked his life for the sake of little Fulton and will continue to risk it so long as a shadow of hope remains. He is one of the most

chivalrous, noble-hearted young men I ever knew, and if he lives will earn his star."

When fifteen minutes passed without bringing the expected signal from the lieutenant, Freeman wondered whether anything was amiss. Had he thought any danger threatened the young officer, he would have hastened to his aid, without hearing his call; but decided to await something more definite.

With the same suddenness as his young friend, he became aware that he was not alone. Some one was near him and that some one must be an enemy.

The disturbance which brought this knowledge was so exceedingly faint that at first the captain could not decide what point it came from. He did not dare move, therefore, through fear of a misstep, but, grasping his Winchester, he looked and listened with all the acuteness he possessed. The Apache must have been the first to detect the presence of another, for, with all of Freeman's caution, he was outwitted by the warrior, who appeared so suddenly that he seemed to rise out of the very earth and to be standing erect in front of the astonished captain before he knew where to look for him.

But Freeman was a veteran soldier and was not the man to surrender, so long as he was able to strike a blow for himself. He recoiled a step, so as to secure elbow room, and was in the act of raising his rifle to his shoulder, when the Apache spoke:

"No fire—me friend."

"Heaven! Mendez, where did you come from?"

asked the astounded white man, recognizing the Apache, upon whom it may be said all their hopes rested.

The warrior was standing in the edge of the moonlight where his hard features were in so plain view that Freeman wondered why he failed to identify him the instant he presented himself.

"'Pache here—soon come," explained Mendez; "we go 'way, where don't come."

This precaution was so sensible that Freeman willingly followed him a few steps further, to a spot where they were not likely to be seen by any one approaching the spring. When they halted it was beside one of those boulders, so numerous in that section that it may be said they were never out of sight. The Apache kept his feet, as did his companion.

The heart of Maurice Freeman was throbbing painfully, for instinctively he felt that this singular visit had something to do with his child. He and Lieutenant Decker supposed the friendly Apache was at a considerable distance, intent on his task of rescuing the little one, and now, much sooner than was anticipated, he had come back, almost to his starting point, and the boy was not with him.

"But he brings news—he brings news and my heart tells me it is bad news," thought the stricken parent, striving manfully to quell all signs of his great sorrow.

What intensified his anguish was the evident fact that something was the matter with Mendez. While

walking in front of the captain, he made several missteps. Once he stumbled, lurching far to one side, and violently recovering himself. Then he straightened up and moved with a firm step, as if he had regained his self-control.

“He has managed in some way to get hold of his favorite drink,” was the despairing thought of Freeman; “he is a fine one to attempt to get my boy out of the hands of a band of his countrymen!”

If anything was needed to confirm this belief it was the manner of Mendez. It has been shown that he was morose by nature, but now his tongue was loosened in a way that Freeman had never known before. He did not stop his walk until he had gone more than a hundred yards from the spring. Then he stopped abruptly, wheeled about and said:

“Cap’n Freem’n brave man—heap big warrior!”

“No, Mendez, I am no braver than you, nor as good a warrior in fighting your people, for I know less of them than you; but tell me, do you bring any news of my boy, who was stolen by some of your people?”

Instead of replying, the Apache devoted a minute or two to regaining mastery of himself. He managed to fix his black eyes on the white man, with something of his old defiant expression, when meeting the gaze of an enemy. By the exercise of his iron will, he succeeded in keeping his poise, but he could not drive out the fumes of the horrible

tiswin from his brain. They loosened his tongue and gave an odd twist to his ideas.

“Pache got boy,” said he; “Mendez see ‘im.”

“I know that as well as you, for I too saw him in their hands. Is that all the news you bring me?”

“Mendez can’t git ‘im.”

“Why not? Have they put him to death?”

The Apache shook his head, without speaking.

“I thought Mendez was a great warrior,” said Freeman, hoping to taunt him into an effort that he seemed reluctant or unable to make; “they told me he could do anything; that he could get my child for me; that he would earn the reward I will give him——”

“Mendez want no reward—he take no money!” interrupted the Apache, fiercely thumping his breast.

“Then has he become a squaw? Is he no longer the great warrior that he used to be? Has he become old and weak?”

“Mendez not old—Mendez not weak! He great warrior!”

Anv reflection upon the courage or skill of the friendly Apache roused his resentment, which was the reason why Freeman pressed him.

“Where is your greatness? You come and tell me that you cannot get my boy away from your people, and yet it is not long ago that you set out to do so. You did not say then you could not take him from them, for you were the brave Mendez that

the white people praise and that is not afraid of any one, whether he be white man or red man. Now you are *afraid*."

"Mendez not 'fraid ! white man lie!" the warrior thundered as he laid his hand on his knife.

"I am not afraid of you, Mendez, but you have been too good a friend of the white people for any of them to wish to harm you. But I repeat your own words. Shall I tell you what is the matter with you?"

"No matter wi' Mendez ! He brave—he strong—he fight."

"There is much the matter with you ; you have been drinking tiswin ; you are not yourself ; but for the tiswin you would be the true, brave, noble Mendez."

This charge being true, intensified the anger of the Apache. He again placed his hand on his knife and drew it partly forth. His scowling face, never attractive at its best, was working with rage. He seemed to be gathering himself to leap upon the man who dared to speak these words to him. Believing he was about to do so, Freeman quietly braced himself for the struggle. He disliked to come to violence with one that had done so much for the settlers and the army, but the exasperation of the captain can be understood. At the moment when his hopes were at the highest, and when he was certain that the scout was putting forth his best efforts, he came staggering back to his friends maudlin, helpless, worthless, good for nothing.

The belief was strong with the parent that if this opportunity was allowed to pass, it would not come again. More than one peculiar circumstance favored the cunning and ability of the scout, the combination being of that nature that a repetition was not in the natural order of things.

The weakness of Mendez for the vicious drink was well known, and no person could be better aware of its palsying effects than Mendez himself. It was to be expected that he would indulge in it when not on duty and the chance offered, but when engaged on an enterprise in which his highest skill was needed, there was no palliation for his dissipation. He must have drunk deliberately, and the father, distressed by fears for his child, could find no excuse for him. His anger was natural.

But, if the Apache meditated an attack on the white man, he changed his mind for the moment. He drew his hand from his knife.

“Say Mendez weak? — say he squaw?” he mumbled.

Freeman saw an appeal in these questions. It was as if the fellow had become sensible of his condition and craved indulgence rather than censure.

“The real Mendez is a brave warrior, but, if he is afraid of the Apaches, he is not Mendez; if he wishes to show to his white brother that he is still brave let him go the Apaches and bring back the boy they hold a prisoner; then Mendez will be cunning, he will be brave, he will be a great warrior.”

The fellow straightened up with a majestic dig-

nity that could not fail to command respect. He had thrown off the spell of the horrible stuff, as a Roman warrior might fling off his cloak to give his limbs freer play.

"Mendez is brave; he is a great warrior; he is greater than Geronimo or Cochise; he is not afraid of them; he will bring back the child to his white brother; let his white brother wait here and soon his heart shall be made glad; he shall sing with joy like the birds in the trees. Mendez will soon return; let my brother have patience."

Maurice Freeman was amazed. He had never heard the surly fellow speak the English tongue with such fluency and eloquence. It was a revelation. He appeared to be another person. He towered in height and was the picture of the great Tecumseh himself, addressing an array of chieftains and urging them to battle.

Before the white man could frame a suitable reply, Mendez turned and strode off, his step that of a conqueror. Captain Freeman gazed in silent wonderment at the figure until it vanished in the gloom and he was left alone.

The only explanation that Freeman could find for this extraordinary occurrence was that when Mendez came to him, though he was so under the influence of tiswin, he was conscious of his unfitness for the task he had undertaken. Prompted by a strange self-accusation, proving that conscience burns in the breast of every being, he had come to make confession. Then he was so stung by the reproofs of

the white man that he was roused out of his sodden condition. He had really thrown off the effects of the poison. In other words he was sober, and the Mendez of old.

With his self-restoration came his natural courage and confidence in his own prowess. He felt able to do what he had planned, and set out to do it. He would show Captain Freeman, not by words but by acts, that he was the invincible Mendez, as the white man had described him to the Apache himself.

All this was well, but it could not remove the shuddering dread from the heart of the father that the fatal blunder had already been made. The Apache's relapse had allowed the golden chance to slip beyond repairing or recovery.

Freeman felt the need of Lieutenant Decker's presence and counsel, but he could not go to him, for the signal agreed upon had not been sounded, and besides, the instructions of Mendez were that the father should wait where he was until his dusky friend returned. He was obliged, therefore, to content himself as best he might.

How long would he be gone? Would it be one hour, two hours, until daylight, or, if he gave way to his weakness again, would he ever return?

Had not the hostiles learned what he was trying to do? Had they not plied him with the atrocious stuff on purpose that he should make an exhibition of himself?

These and similar questionings were rioting in the brain of Maurice Freeman, when he perceived that

Mendez was with him again. He appeared with the same strange suddenness as before, but alas! he was alone.

“Where is my boy?” asked the agonized father.

“The heart of Mendez is heavy, for he brings evil tidings; the papoose of his white brother is—dead.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE REALITY.

AS MENDEZ pronounced the dreadful words, the father, overcome by his emotions, uttered a groan and sank to the earth. As if pitying his grief, and feeling that it was idle to say anything more, the Apache turned slowly about and walked away, leaving the white man alone with his grief.

And then some one touched Freeman on the shoulder, shook him and he—awoke.

It was all a dream. He had sat down with his back against the boulder to await the signal from Lieutenant Decker, and, hearing it not, had sunk into a restless sleep, and now opened his eyes under the vigorous stirring of his young friend.

“Come,” said the officer in a guarded voice, “a sentinel must not sleep on his post. I heard you moan and thought you had been hurt.”

It is impossible to throw off on the instant the effects of a vivid dream. It will linger for a time in our thoughts, even though strong sense tells us the whole thing is absurd. Captain Freeman during his days of campaigning had learned to fall asleep and to awaken quickly. He saw almost on

the instant the true situation and greeted his friend cordially and cautiously.

“This was a piece of thoughtlessness on my part; but, lieutenant, I have gone through a frightful dream: it makes me shudder even now.”

“I thought something of the kind was under way, for I was guided to this spot by a moan that was like that of a dying person. It was only a little while ago that three Apaches came down to the spring or rivulet, as you may call it, to drink. They stood for some minutes talking. Had you groaned in your sleep or breathed heavily, your slumber would have turned to that which knows no waking.”

“I have been fortunate, but perhaps it is well that I slept, and yet I am sorry, for its remembrance is terrible.”

“You have no faith in dreams, captain, I am sure?”

“None the less they impress us, no matter how we ridicule them.”

“But come! that must have been a lively one; let me hear about it.”

Seated under the shadow of the huge boulder, where they knew no danger threatened, the two talked freely, though each took care that their voices did not penetrate far from the spot. Freeman gave the particulars of his dream, and it was plain that despite his rugged nature it had made a deep impression on him.

“Lieutenant, do you suppose there is anything in

it?" he asked at the conclusion of the singular story. The young man respected the sorrow of the elder too sincerely to make light of what he said, though he himself felt not the slightest faith in the warnings and visions which it is claimed sometimes come to people in slumber.

"Nothing at all; your feelings have been so wrought up with anxiety that it would be still stranger if you had not dreamed of your boy. How could it be otherwise when there is nothing else in your thoughts?"

"But it was so realistic that it clings by me."

"As a matter of course; your brain was surcharged and overflowed with the same string of ideas, and did not cease its throbings when the rest of the body was asleep. They say we never dream of anything which has not previously been in our thoughts, but that is an error, for I know I have had fancies in sleep which had never been in my head during waking hours."

"I have always held the same views as you, and yet we cannot deny, lieutenant, that there have been many verifications of dreams. To dispute it would be to make out some of the best of men and women to be falsifiers."

"In their cases, I think, a good deal was due to imagination, but you are not of that build. A physician would explain your ugly dream on the plainest of physiological principles, so literally there's nothing in it."

"You know how fond Mendez is of tiswin."

“That feature alone proves the character of your vision. The fellow shares with his people the weakness for that extract of hades, but when he is engaged on business like this you could not induce him to swallow a drop, if you held it under his nose. That phase of your dream, therefore, condemns it all.”

“I am relieved to hear you say so,” remarked Freeman with a sigh; “you know more about him than I do, and could hardly mistake on that point.”

“Rather curiously it is only a few days ago that some of us were talking about that very peculiarity. One of the men who had scouted for months with him and Cemuri said that both had a certain conscientiousness or rather devotion to duty which kept them strictly sober, till their work is done. Then, too,” added the lieutenant, as if resolved to leave no foundation for Freeman’s fears, “there is no way by which Mendez could have got the vile stuff, had he been so disposed.”

“Could he not have gone among the Apaches and drunk with them?”

“He, a White Mountain Apache, whose work for us is well known, venture along the hostiles, when they are on the war path!” exclaimed Decker, turning with astonishment to his companion; “why do not you and I go among them? It would be less sensible for him, since they hate him more than both of us together.”

“Well,” said Freeman, “your words have given me comfort. I have never had any experience in the dreams which serve as warnings.”

“Besides,” added the lieutenant, as the new thought struck him, “my recollection of the old superstition is that dreams go by contraries, so that on that basis your omen is a good one. Let me see—the theory was that every dream was to be translated by the rule of contraries, unless it came to us of a Friday night. Since this is Thursday evening that lets you out.”

“Enough,” said Freeman, now able to rally from his depression; “I care nothing for the dream, and can look at it through your eyes. You have not told me whether you saw or heard anything out of the usual, though there must have been something of the sort, or you forgot to give that call for me to join you.”

“Well,” replied the lieutenant lightly, “I had a little entertainment of my own, and at one time it looked as if matters would become lively.”

Thereupon he gave the incidents which have already been told the reader, and which drove the last remnants of the dream from Freeman’s thoughts.

“It seems to me,” said the captain, “that what you tell me gives good cause for uneasiness.”

“How so?”

“You have met four of the Apaches at least, or rather you saw them. We thought none of them were near. We must be close to the main party.”

“That does not follow; the one with whom I played hide and seek was a sort of wanderer. He had drifted into this section, and, not liking the look of things, has gone.”

“But he learned that you were here—you a white man, and would not be likely to believe you were alone.”

“I do not see why he should not think so, since he himself was alone. He has known of the water here and concluded that I had come from somewhere to get a drink and was on my return, when we came near running against each other. Remember that we did not meet at the rock where we agreed to await the return of Mendez, so he can know nothing of that.”

“But, if he carries the news to camp, will not the Apaches suspect the truth, or perhaps more than the truth? They will think a party of white men are after my child and become doubly cautious.”

“While it is possible you may be right, I place less importance on the incident than you.”

“And the three whom you saw at the spring?”

“Their course proved they had not the slightest suspicion of anything of that nature. Had they believed any of us were near, they would have come and gone without detection, or they would have done worse.”

“Well, I hope it is as you say; I am in that nervous state that I cannot look at matters with the coolness you do.”

“Don’t get the idea that I consider it fair sailing before us. Mendez has a hard job in hand, and, were any one else concerned, I would have little hope; but he understands what he is doing and is following some carefully laid plan of his own. At any rate we shall know before morning.”

The consciousness that the crisis was so near added to the uneasiness of Freeman. He rose to his feet and looked anxiously around in the gloom; but they were so far removed from the little rivulet or spring of water that a dozen men might have come and gone without being seen, had they but exercised ordinary caution.

“Since there is no telling when Mendez may return,” suggested Freeman, “is it not best that we should return to the other rock?”

Lieutenant Decker saw no objection to this course, and he, too, rose to his feet. He stood a moment, debating some question with himself.

“I wonder,” he finally said, “whether any more of them can be in the neighborhood. I am inclined to take another look at the spring. If you will remain here, I will promise not to keep you waiting more than a few minutes.”

“Very well; there’s no fear of my falling asleep again, and if you are absent too long I will go forward and find out the cause.”

“Wait for the signal, or better, I will return to you.”

“It is the same distrust,” reflected Freeman, when he was once more left alone; “but in this business I suppose one man is better than two.”

Despite the reassuring words of the lieutenant, he was somewhat troubled by the new phase of the situation. Of the four Apaches whom he had seen, one received a sharp reminder of the presence of a white man in the neighborhood. If he carried the

news to the camp of his people, they would see the probable meaning of it, since no white person would come thither for a drink of water, unless he left companions in the vicinity. The fact that he was near the spring would indicate that others were not far off, and that the solitary Apache held such belief was almost proved by his withdrawal in the face of danger. A warrior with his acumen and skill, who had come so near outwitting his antagonist, would not be apt to give up the game of hide and seek, unless he expected a change of conditions through the arrival of other white men. He must have felt himself the equal of a single foe, but had no wish to become involved with several. His course was simply a retreat before an enemy whom he expected to be joined by reinforcements.

On the other hand, he might be operating on his own responsibility, or, if a scout, would not rejoin the main party until he could take more definite information to them.

It will be seen that the young officer was in a maze of doubt and speculation. Like the detective trying to trace a crime, he could spin theories without limit, only perhaps to find them all wrong in the end. The situation which confronted them was that they were to wait at the rock some distance off until the coming of Mendez, and when he came, he would bring good or evil news. That was the situation in a nutshell.

Had the lieutenant discovered more Apaches near the spring, he would have seen cause for misgiving

and alarm. He, therefore, reconnoitered the spot with the utmost care, listening and peering here and there with the patient caution of an Apache himself. It required but a brief while, however, to satisfy himself that none of his enemies were prowling in the neighborhood. Some of them might have come and gone, while he was holding converse with Freeman, but it was unlikely.

The lieutenant, therefore, did not hesitate to emit the guarded whistle which quickly brought his friend to his side.

“I have discovered nothing amiss,” he explained; “I don’t believe any of them have been here since the three I told you about.”

“I presume you wish to take the lead as usual?”

“It makes no difference,” replied Decker, who, however, took care to place himself in advance, with the other only two or three yards behind him. The route had become familiar to both and neither needed to warn the other to be careful. They advanced in the crouching posture to which they had become accustomed, with heads thrown forward, stepping softly, looking keenly on all sides and listening for the first indication of danger, which might come from the rear as well as from the front.

When the lieutenant found himself facing the huge boulder where he had encountered the Apache some time before, he paused, raising his hand for Freeman to do the same. It seemed as if his old enemy must still be near, and the young man did

not pass the dangerous point until he had called into play all the skill of which he was master and convinced himself that nothing further was to be feared. Then the two picked their way to the rendezvous by the rock.

CHAPTER XXV.

A REMINISCENCE.

REACHING the rock, the two men made another reconnoissance before sitting down to await the return of the White Mountain Apache. Nothing was discovered to cause misgiving, and they were almost convinced that they would remain undisturbed until the coming of the scout upon whom all their hopes were now placed.

The moon had passed further over in the heavens, and its face was frequently screened by drifting masses of clouds which rendered its light treacherous and uncertain. They talked in low tones, not forgetting to keep constant watch for the approach of their enemies, some of whom it was certain were at no great distance.

“That affair of mine with the rattlesnake,” said the lieutenant, “recalled the singular adventure of two scouts under Major Forsythe, in the autumn of 1868. The peace commissioners concluded treaties the previous year with the Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches and Apaches. Other treaties were formed, the object being to secure the removal of the different tribes to the reservations selected for them. There was delay and bad faith on the

part of our agents, and, in the face of the treaties, many outrages were committed by the Indians in Kansas and Colorado. Troops were kept on watch along the lines of travel across the State of Kansas into Colorado, and a company of scouts under Major Forsythe, numbering fifty picked men, left Fort Hayes, Kansas, in September. A week was spent in scouting, when they reached Fort Wallace, where Forsythe proceeded to refit his command. Then news came that the Indians had attacked a train near Sheridan, a small railway town, eighty miles away. Forsythe set out with his force to punish the marauders.

“The Indians were pressed so hard that they resorted to their old trick of breaking up into smaller parties, thus confusing their trail and rendering effective pursuit impossible. Forsythe pushed on to the Republican River, where he struck another trail which grew broader and more distinct, until it was clear that a large number of horses and cattle had been recently driven over it.

“At the close of day, the command went into camp on the Arickaree Fork of the Republican, at a point where the river divides so as to inclose a low sandy island about a hundred yards long. The soldiers had but one day’s provisions, but their intention was to push on and strike the Indians, who were known to be not far off. At daylight, while the men were saddling up, they were attacked by fully a thousand Brûlés, Sioux, Cheyennes and ‘Dog Soldiers.’ Forsythe retreated to the island,

and the position was made as strong as possible. In the first attack, Forsythe was badly wounded and two of his men killed. A few minutes later a second shot shattered the major's left leg between the knee and ankle. Almost at the same moment, the surgeon was killed. Every horse was shot. That fight and siege formed one of the most fearful episodes in the history of our Indian wars. At the end of the first day not a horse was alive, the provisions were gone, the surgeon was dead, there were no medical stores, four men were killed, four mortally and four badly wounded, ten others being slightly hurt, so that almost one-half of the command had been struck.

“On the other hand, the Indians had been decisively repulsed, the soldiers had plenty of ammunition, water could be obtained by digging in the sand, and the bodies of the horses and mules would ward off starvation. But the men needed help in the worst way. The nearest post from which this could be obtained was Fort Wallace, one hundred and ten miles distant. Two of the best scouts, Trudeau and Jack Stillwell, volunteered to run the gauntlet.

“As soon as it was dark, they stole from the island. There was little hope that they would succeed, but both men were brave and cool-headed, and, if the thing were possible, they were the ones to accomplish it. The defenders waited long and listened, and hearing nothing, believed they had been captured. At dusk on the second day, during which there was continuous fighting, two more scouts

were sent out, but they were discovered and barely succeeded in getting back to the island. This convinced all that Stillwell and Trudeau had failed, but such was not the fact.

“Those two scouts, in leaving the island, moved down stream, keeping as near the middle as they could. The water was so shallow that neither could swim, and they crawled on their hands and knees for most of the distance. Lucky for the men, the night was clouded, and the moon had set before they left the island. They kept in the river for three miles when they waded ashore, and, hiding their trail as best they could, made for the nearest timber. When day dawned, they were ten miles from the river and their danger was greater than ever. The Indians were patrolling the stream, on the watch for just such attempts and the prairie grass was so short that it was impossible for the scouts to advance without exposing themselves. The only way to escape capture was to conceal themselves and wait for night.

“Sweeping the surrounding prairie, they observed a spot where the grass was about a foot higher than the rest. With the utmost care they crept to it and found it just the place they wanted. The dead body of some animal had acted as a fertilizer, causing the grass to grow with more vigor and density than elsewhere. The bones were those of a buffalo whose flesh had disappeared long before.

“Lying down in this hiding place, the scouts munched the slight meal they had brought with

them, and then peeped out at their surroundings, which were anything but reassuring. Indian horsemen seemed to be moving on all sides, and the sound of firing from up the river showed that fighting had been renewed. Neither of the scouts dared rise from a prone position, and were in constant danger of discovery. If some of the sharp-eyed redskins detected the trail leading from the river, they were certain to follow it to the clump of grass.

“Trudeau and Stillwell agreed to take turns in sleeping and watching for every three hours. Trudeau was the first to act as sentinel. He lay upon his side, took a big chew of his army plug tobacco, and peeped between the blades of grass, while his companion slept. Before long Trudeau saw a sight which was so alarming that he awoke his companion. Twenty Indian horsemen were approaching and were sure to pass very close to the clump of grass, even if they did not ride through it.

“Stillwell peeped out and said :

“‘We’ve got to hug the ground close, but if they see us, they’ll find out we come high.’ ‘You bet,’ replied Trudeau and the two grimly waited events.

“The Indians seemed to have no special business, and rode so slowly that it was a long time before they reached the point only a hundred yards away. It was at this critical moment that a feeling of impending danger caused Stillwell to turn his head. As he did so, he saw an immense rattlesnake gliding through the bones of the dead buffalo and coming

straight toward them. It looked as if the scouts had invaded the reptile's home, for he did that which my pet did not do—he advanced upon them with the intention of attack.

"The first thought of the men was to shoot or to club him to death with the stocks of their rifles, but any such act would have revealed their presence to the Indians now close at hand. The next thought was to stare the snake out of countenance as the rattler himself sometimes does with his victims. Stillwell made the attempt, but without any success. The snake meant business.

"The rattler came straight forward until within four feet of Trudeau, when he began coiling to strike. Not a moment was to be lost, and Stillwell made up his mind to shoot the reptile. He preferred death at the hands of the redskins to that from the bite of the rattler.

"For a minute or two, however, the jaws of Trudeau had been vigorously working on the tobacco in his mouth. He had accumulated a volume of spittle, surcharged with nicotine. He was nearer to the snake than his companion, and he now shot out a thick yellow stream, as if from the nozzle of a hose. It landed directly in the eyes and mouth of the rattler, as he was almost in the act of striking.

"Well," said Lieutenant Decker, with a smile, "that particular serpent had never learned to chew, and the pungent stuff in his eyes and mouth must have disgusted him to fury. He had never been

attacked with that sort of ammunition and it threw him into a panic. He flung himself out of his coil a good deal quicker than he entered it, and, turning tail, glided through the grass and out of sight with such celerity that the scouts, despite their dangerous situation, shook with silent laughter.

“Their mirth did not last long, for the Indians were so near that discovery seemed inevitable. Lying as flat as they could, and wishing they had the power to stamp themselves into the earth, the scouts knew that a minute or two would decide their fate. Capture by the Indians meant death by torture, and they held their rifles tightly grasped, resolved that if the worst came they would prove the truth of Stillwell’s boast that they ‘came high.’

“The redskins, however, were not making for the clump of grass. They rode past, the horses on a walk and so close that their hoofbeats and the mumble of their voices were plainly heard, but they did not stop and that particular danger was over.

“Trudeau and Stillwell alternately watched and slept until night came again. The rattler was too sick of his reception to bother them further, and not once did the Indians approach so near as in the early forenoon. When the coast was clear, the two stole out from their hiding place and resumed their journey to Fort Wallace, walking rapidly and often breaking into a trot. They were tough fellows who could keep this up for hours, and, knowing the extremity of their friends on the island, they did not spare themselves. They reached Fort Wallace and

quickly made known the need of sending instant help to Major Forsythe.

“Such an appeal is never made in vain, and Major Bankhead was soon on the way with four troops of cavalry. The Indians tried to jump his camp twenty miles from the Arickaree, but failed, and, without waiting to give battle, the whole band retreated. Major Forsythe and what was left of his command were saved.”*

“And it was your experience with the rattler a little while ago that called this incident to mind?” was the inquiring comment of Captain Freeman.

“Yes; I had not thought of it for a long time, but when I leveled my revolver and was about to pull trigger, the whole thing flashed upon me. I saw the similarity of my situation with that of Stillwell and Trudeau, though I was not in quite so bad a fix, for the rattler did not mean to attack me, if I let him alone, and there was but the single Indian that was looking for me. But to fire my pistol would undo what I had accomplished by my change of base.”

“You had other charges in the weapon, to say nothing of your Winchester, which was within reach.”

“It was not that, but the dusky dog would have known where I was and gained the advantage that was mine.”

“It did you no good.”

“On the contrary, it convinced him that I was up

*This incident is a fact.

to his tricks and caused him to withdraw without any more attempts against me."

During these minutes, the two maintained their watchfulness. The words were spoken in low tones, and, while the lieutenant was relating his reminiscence, he continually glanced from side to side. The fact that all remained tranquil confirmed the two in their growing belief that nothing was to be feared from the Apaches.

"It must be growing late," finally remarked Freeman, "and Mendez, it seems to me, is overdue."

The lieutenant drew out his watch, but the moonlight was not strong enough for him to discern the figures.

"I'm bound to know the time," he said, removing his cap, so as to shade the light of the match which he drew from the small rubber safe he always carried and scraped it across the face of the rock.

"That's risky business," whispered his companion.

"That's the reason I'm doing it," replied the officer, speaking more truthfully than he suspected. "But it shan't give much help to any of the fellows lurking near."

Before the twist of flame could assume shape a puff of the breath extinguished it.

"It's later than I suspected," he remarked.

"I suppose it is near ten o'clock?"

"It's a quarter to eleven."

"It must be time to look for Mendez."

"I think so, but there's no certainty about it; he may be here in five minutes and not for five hours."

I suspect he will delay his return for a considerable while."

"For what cause?"

"You know there isn't much chance of doing anything against Maroz and Ceballos for a long time yet, and there is no need, therefore, of his coming here and waiting for hours. He would have to lose sight of them for a good while, so that the conditions are likely to change very materially when he ventures on a move against them, whereas, by keeping the two under his eye until it was time to move, he could do so intelligently."

"Furthermore, so long as he keeps beyond our reach we can't urge him to a haste that is against his judgment."

"Doubtless that has something to do with it, but —*st!*"

Both heard the same signal that had alarmed Freeman during the afternoon, when he believed he was inextricably caught. They listened for its repetition, but the next few minutes were marked by perfect stillness. Then, when they whispered their speculations about its import, they disagreed as to the point whence it came.

Freeman thought it was from the direction of the rivulet, where they had quenched their thirst, but the lieutenant was positive that it issued from a spot at right angles to that course.

"We'll find out when we hear it again, as we shall do in a few minutes."

"Do you think it is Mendez?"

“Yes, but it won’t do to bank on it until we get further data ; it’s the favorite signal of his to announce his coming, but no doubt others of his people use a similar call. If it is he he will come right to this spot—ah, you are right !”

So it proved. The gentle whistle sounded again and this time there could be no mistaking its source ; it was about half way between the rock and the rivulet or spring.

“Don’t forget that it may be some one else ; if so, leave him to me,” said the officer, stealthily drawing his revolver ; “I’ve been disappointed so many times to-day that I am entitled to this chance—there he is !”

The outlines of an Apache warrior silently assumed shape in the dim moonlight, and another “disappointment” fell to the lot of Lieutenant Decker, who returned his weapon to its place as he recognized Mendez, when he uttered a single word of greeting.

It takes a great deal to rouse the emotions of an American Indian, but if ever there was an amazed warrior it was this White Mountain Apache. He had visited the camp of Maroz and Ceballos and the discovery he made was one that fairly carried him off his feet, and which, when related to Maurice Freeman and Lieutenant Decker, held them dumfounded with astonishment.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SURPRISE INDEED.

MENDEZ, the White Mountain Apache and friend of the whites, possessed mental gifts above most of his race. More than once he had displayed a grasp of details and a comprehension of plans rarely shown by his people, and which were so unexpected to the officers on the reservation that they were filled with admiration. They trusted more to his skill and perception than they did to any other of the dusky scouts.

He had little to say, immediately after the outbreak of Maroz and Ceballos, but those who knew him were sure his active brain was at work, and that, sooner or later, he would surprise them by some exploit that proved an almost intuitive knowledge of the schemes of the hostiles.

The part he acted during the day of the revolt of Maroz and Ceballos has been told. Lieutenant Decker, who was his constant companion, afterward stated that from the moment he rode out from Fort Reno with him and the three cavalrymen, he did not utter twenty words, and those that fell from his lips were mostly in answer to inquiries, while the majority remained unanswered.

It is to be presumed that Mendez was satisfied with the steps taken to head off Maroz and his confederates, for, had it been otherwise, he would have protested. But the effort failed, and then the fellow found use for his tongue. He was freely consulted by the colonel, and the steps that were taken to subdue the outbreak were materially modified to meet the views of the sagacious Mendez.

No member of the hostiles knew more about the fastnesses of the Apache range than did he. He read in the display of the signal smoke and the actions of the band that had slain the family of Captain Murray an attempt to mislead the whites as to their true purpose. Instead of rendezvousing at the advanced point, where from their actions it would be supposed they had arranged to come together, they fixed upon a wild, precipitous gorge nearly two miles further in the mountains.

Locating there and keeping vigilant watch against surprise the leaders would send out their runners and bring in all the disaffected warriors that could be persuaded to take the risk of another revolt against the authorities. When they were fully assembled they would burst from the mountains like a cyclone and spread woe and death among the ranches and settlements over an area of hundreds of square miles.

To crush this rebellion in the bud was the work of the soldiers, and enough has been told to show that it was a task most difficult of accomplishment. How could the brave boys in blue hope to surprise

the camp of the hostiles, when they were prepared for such an attempt and were certain to take every possible precaution against it?

Evidently there was but one way and even that offered scant probability of success. By taking the direct trail of the raiders and following it into the mountains every rod of advance would become known to the Apaches. They would form their ambush, empty many a saddle and scatter the survivors in dismay. It was for just such a campaign that the hostiles planned and which they believed was to be attempted against them.

It is not insisted that, but for Mendez, this course would have been adopted. The intelligent officers and soldiers of the Southwest learned fast, and speedily became adepts in the subtlety of Apache warfare. They learned how to ambuscade their dusky foes as well as to avoid the traps set for them, and the fight was often that of cunning against cunning, rather than bravery against bravery.

The colonel, however, willingly based his course of action on the belief of Mendez that the rendezvous of the hostiles had been fixed at a certain point among the foothills, which he described and located so clearly that the other White Mountain scouts recognized the spot, and were able to guide the troops unerringly to it, by a route which would allow them to use their horses for most of the distance.

Fort Reno, standing on the western bank of the Tonto, is fully twenty miles north of the Salt River,

a principal tributary of the Gila. Instead of riding eastward toward the Sierra Ancha, which would have been the most direct route, the cavalry swept down the valley of the smaller stream, crossed the larger, and then headed eastward toward the Apache range, passing to the south of Grape Vine Spring, and fording Pinal Creek, which flows directly northward into the Salt River.

Under the guidance of the Indian scouts, this was carried out with perfect success, the cavalry entering the foothills from an unexpected point, and stealing their way toward the Apache camp without detection from the enemy.

But the ride was a tremendous one, covering as it did a distance of more than fifty miles. It was not begun until the afternoon was well along, and when daylight dawned much was still before them. They were forced to halt to rest their exhausted animals and to prepare for the more delicate and dangerous work before them.

Meantime Mendez and Lieutenant Decker were doing their part well. Accompanied by a squad of half a dozen cavalry, they crossed Salt River at a point where they were certain of being seen by the hostiles, riding here and there, apparently in a blind search for the trail. They were ordered to keep this up until night, and then recross at different points, come together on the northern bank and return to the fort.

It will be understood that the object of this diversion was to deceive the hostiles as to the real plan

of campaign. It was sought to make them believe the pursuit and attack would come from the front, whereas, the cavalry were at that very time making all haste to reach the rear of their camp.

The members of the smaller party found their way in due time to the fort, with the exception of a couple—Mendez and Lieutenant Decker. They stayed behind and pushed matters on their own account.

Their purpose was altogether different from that of Captain Shindle and the others, for they could not hope to accomplish anything effective against the hostiles: they were aiming to help Maurice Freeman to recover his boy.

As the lieutenant had stated, Mendez knew and told him that the father would do precisely what he did do, and that, unless he was checked, he would fall a victim to Apache ferocity, without affording the slightest aid to his child. Freeman had made the natural mistake of believing the hostiles would rendezvous at a point much further in advance than they did. Some of their scouts would be there, on the watch for the approach of the whites, and the chance of the father's circumventing them was as one in a million.

The lieutenant and the scout, having completed all they could do in the way of diverting the suspicion of the Apaches, now gave their whole energy to the help of the stricken parent.

The whole question narrowed down to that of the whereabouts of the captive, and whether it was

possible to secure possession of him unharmed. Mendez suspected that Maroz and Ceballos, with probably one or two companions, were at the advanced position referred to, but whether they retained the immediate custody of the child, or had sent him further into the mountains with the main band, or had put him to death, were questions which could be answered only by personal investigation.

The natural conclusion was that the first proceeding of the leaders in the outbreak would be to send the child away from them, not only as a surer means against his recapture, but to leave his abductors untrammelled in their movements. Such, I say, was the natural theory, but the sagacious Mendez saw a reason for hoping that the reverse was the case; in other words, that matters were just as it was desired they should be.

Maroz was irrestrainable in his ferocity when aroused. No crueler savage ever lived. He carried off little Fulton Freeman, because he saw the chance of torturing his parents' hearts with deeper grief by doing so than by driving a bullet through his brain. He helped to shoot down the children of Captain Murray, because their father and mother fell during the opening of the scrimmage, and, therefore, they could not be distressed further; but he recognized the son of Freeman and saw his opportunity.

To turn the little fellow over to the other Apaches back in the mountains would be to relin-

quish, for a time at least, control of his fate. There were turbulent spirits with the main band who were likely to insist on their own views as to what should be done with him. It was not improbable that these would conflict with the purposes of Maroz and cause him keen disappointment.

It cannot be denied that this was theorizing matters down to a fine point, but it was the theory upon which Mendez acted in his attempts to help Maurice Freeman in his extremity.

The correctness of his belief in the first instance was proven by his discovery of the white man near where he expected him to be. Not intending to be hampered by the movements of the anxious parent, his first step was to pilot him to a safe point, and leave him in the company of the lieutenant until such time as their services should be needed—a contingency that, as the Apache viewed it, was so remote as to be almost out of sight.

Parting from them, as has been described elsewhere, Mendez began one of the most difficult tasks of his life: it was that of locating not only Maroz and Ceballos, but the young captive. That had to be done before the still harder work of rescuing the little one should be attempted.

It is not worth while to follow the wonderful scout, step by step, in his approach to the camp of the hostiles. It may be described as the absolute perfection of woodcraft—noiseless, unerring, and as direct as that of the bloodhound on the trail of the fugitive. As the gloom closed him in, and the black

eyes lost half their function, his advance showed hardly any diminution, for he was never at a loss as to the course to take.

But there came a time when he was within a stone's throw almost of the spot he had fixed upon as the right one that his phantom-like progress was checked. The slow, silent, gliding motion ceased and the dusky scout stood motionless.

At that moment he was among the stunted pines, where the moonlight was so faint that his keen vision could penetrate only a short distance in any direction, but the conviction was strong upon him that some person was near. He had not seen or heard anything to impart such knowledge, but that peculiar sense known by the name of intuition was as unmistakable as sight or hearing could have been.

Sure enough, while gazing to the right, he outlined the figure of an Apache warrior, standing as quiet as himself, in a spot where the dim illumination would have been secure protection against any eyes except those of Mendez. The figure remained stationary only a few seconds when it vanished among the trees in the direction of the camp of the hostiles.

As it moved off the friendly scout received a shock, caused by observing a resemblance to one whom he had known before, and who was the last person in the world he expected to see. The emotion, however, was transitory, and, waiting but a minute or two, he resumed his stealthy approach to the camp.

A few steps further and he caught the twinkle of a fire among the trees, and he had only to put forth the matchless caution he had displayed from the first to gain sight of that which he was so desirous of seeing.

There was a small fire of broken sticks kindled against the face of a boulder, and in front of it was an Apache warrior stretched on the ground in a lazy attitude, smoking his pipe and seemingly half asleep, as he gazed thoughtfully at the embers; but Mendez needed no one to tell him that every sense of the fellow was on the alert, and that the slightest misstep on the part of the scout would bring him to his feet like a flash.

It was Ceballos who lolled in this fashion, and he was the only Indian in sight. His companion or companions were absent, doubtless on the lookout for the approach of the soldiers, who had been observed hovering on the trail during the afternoon. Mendez scanned every portion of his field of vision, but Ceballos was alone.

That he had friends near, however, was proven the next minute when a call, similar to that used by the friendly scout, sounded among the trees. Instantly the Apache came to a sitting posture, with his head turned partly sideways, in the attitude of intense attention.

Then he answered the signal in the same guarded manner, and looked to the left, whence a second figure emerged, with the noiselessness of a shadow. As the firelight fell upon his face, Mendez recog-

nized Maroz, the fierce Apache, who had led the revolt and whose hands were already stained with crime.

He bent down by the fire, lit his pipe, coolly seated himself beside his companion, and the two began talking together.

It was all important that a part at least of their words should be overheard, since they were sure to help materially in gaining the knowledge which the White Mountain Indian was seeking. Their voices were low, but it was rather in obedience to custom than through fear of any eavesdroppers. The stillness was profound, and the listener was able to catch enough of the words to hold the drift of conversation.

The result was a remarkable confirmation of his own wisdom, for it proved that the couple had placed themselves in this position, near the trail leading into the mountains, to detect the approach of the soldiers, and to give notice to the band, that they might fully prepare to receive them. Maroz and Ceballos speculated as to whether their pursuers had formed any suspicion of the truth, and were making their advance with such care that they would not reach the spot until midnight or later. Nothing, however, that was overheard showed that they suspected the cavalry would try to steal to the rear of their camp ; they looked for them over the direct route, as it may be called.

But the great question, after all, remained unanswered. Where was the boy that these vagrants

stole from the destroyed home of Captain Murray? Inasmuch as he was not in sight, it was fair to presume he was with the main band, further in the mountains. Mendez suspected this was the fact, but he was not prepared fully to believe it until proof was given. It need not be said, therefore, that he listened with the closest attention to the words of the couple.

But the minutes passed without affording a hint of the information he was after. Neither Maroz nor Ceballos referred to the lad, but talked about the soldiers, whom they were expecting, and who they were anxious should come. The two took turns in moving back over the trail, so as to prevent any possible surprise, and their presence together was intended for only a short time, and came about because they were quite sure their pursuers would wait until the night was further along.

All at once Mendez caught a reference to the child, but the usually stolid fellow was roused to the point of exasperation by the action of Maroz, who, at the moment he made the remark, shifted his position so as to turn his face directly away from him. Ceballos imitated the movement in order to accommodate him, so interfering with the sounds of their voices that Mendez could not identify a word, even though all were uttered in the same tone as before.

No more trying situation can be imagined than that of the scout, who, on the threshold of information, found the door shut in his face. It was evi-

dent that the couple were uttering the very sentences he wished to hear, and it was equally evident that he could not hear them so long as the relative position of the parties remained the same.

Instead of waiting in the hope that they would make another move that would favor him, Mendez promptly took the only course that offered hope ; he moved round to the other side of the camp, so as to place himself in front of his enemies.

This was a task of such extreme delicacy that he stealthily withdrew until beyond sight of the little blaze. With all his wonderful woodcraft he dared not attempt the circuit while so near to camp, nor, great as was his impatience, did he allow himself to be unduly hurried.

But he was expeditious, and striking the right point he again advanced, catching the glimmer of the fire before he had gone a dozen steps in a straight line.

It was a night of surprises, and the greatest of his life now came to him.

Maroz and Ceballos held the same position as before and were talking apparently about the captive, concerning whom the spy was anxious to secure information ; but a third Indian was present. He must have come during the few minutes the scout was out of sight of camp. His coming was as skillful as that of Mendez himself, for he had heard and seen nothing of him. That singular intuition which revealed the presence of another, when invisible to the eye and inaudible to the ear,

was not always with Mendez, or he would have discovered his approach.

The new arrival was standing erect, between the couple on the ground and the fire, with his back toward the latter. He was talking, and while holding his rifle in one hand gesticulated with the other. The same indefinable something in his appearance and manner told Mendez that he was the warrior whom he had seen a short time before.

But the face of the Apache was in shadow, and for several minutes he could not identify him. At the end of that time, however, he suddenly turned, so that the firelight fell upon his countenance. And then, as Mendez looked, he recognized him as Cemuri, his companion of years, whom he was certain was slain by Maroz within the preceding twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

IT MUST not be supposed, from what has been related about Mendez, the White Mountain scout, that he was superior to the weaknesses peculiar to his race. That he was brave, loyal to the whites, cunning, full of resources and a consummate master of woodcraft, was conceded by his bitterest enemies ; but while he possessed these admirable traits, it must be stated that he shared the unfortunate fondness of his people for intoxicants. At times he indulged in this love for the frightful decoction, "tiswin," which, as has been made known elsewhere, is the product of fermented corn, and is one of the most villainous forms of "fire-water" conceivable.

Had Mendez related the particulars of the outbreak of Maroz and Ceballos, he would have stated that he, Cemuri and they were indulging their weakness and that, humiliating as the confession must have been, he fell more under its influence than any one of them. In fact, he was so far gone that his recollection of the affray was always exceedingly misty. He recalled that, like the

explosion of a bombshell, the party suddenly became engaged in a fierce conflict, in which he was the principal offender, and in some way he was slightly wounded and then left alone. The facts that afterward came to light were of an interesting character.

It is a physiological fact that intoxicants remove the sense of moral restraint in a person, or, as it has been expressed, a man, when under their influence, will do that which he would do when sober if he dared ; in other words, while in that condition he acts out his natural self.

This was the case with Maroz and Ceballos, who, though less helpless than Mendez, became so reckless that they threw off the mask they had been wearing so long, and showed themselves the ferocious miscreants they had always been. They cast aside all restraint, and, being more sober than Mendez, would have slain him but for the interference of Cemuri, who had more self-command than even they. He was able to refrain when he had barely tasted the fiery stuff, and with a subtlety like that of Mendez, when he was his own master, he convinced Maroz and his companion that he was with them in sentiment and would eagerly join in the outbreak.

He professed to have a grievance against the colonel at the fort, and was only awaiting the chance to repay it. He would have preferred to wait still longer, but since the couple were determined upon taking the war-path without delay, he was ready to risk everything.

That he succeeded in convincing the two of his earnestness was proof that he was as sagacious in some respects as his comrade for many years. He would not permit the latter, however, to receive any serious injury, and thus it was that the courageous fellow, who was literally helpless, was allowed to wander off in the darkness, with little more than a scratch, received from Maroz himself, who had meant to destroy him without mercy. Cemuri joined the rebels, displaying an ardor that surpassed, if possible, their own, and so well counterfeited that they were wholly deceived.

Mendez spent the night in sodden slumber, but became himself on the morrow. Brushing the cobwebs from his brain, and recalling the grotesque incidents of the night before, he found himself mystified to understand how it was he was alive and substantially unharmed.

It was a part of Cemuri's far-reaching scheme to make it seem he was dead. By this means his opportunities for befriending the whites were increased. When, therefore, Mendez heard from others that his former companion had been slain and his body flung into the bush he doubted the truth of the statement no more than he doubted that Maroz and Ceballos were leading the formidable revolt. He leaped upon his pony and dashed to Fort Reno in all haste with the tidings. He was considerably mixed as to details, but his story was accepted with little questioning; and the measures were set on foot that have been made clear elsewhere.

Although Maroz and Ceballos had burned their bridges behind them, they were not sufficiently recovered from the effects of their debauch to undertake offensive movements before the morrow.

Enough has been told to give an idea of the emotions of the scout, when he recognized Cemuri in the camp of the hostiles, and saw him in friendly converse with them. Even his stolid nature was too startled to permit him to form a satisfactory explanation, until he had listened awhile to their conversation, and had managed to recall a little more clearly the events of the preceding evening. But it was not long ere he grasped the whole plot of his friend, whose peculiar mental qualities were better known to him than to any one else.

The first natural question was as to why Cemuri, if aiming to give the whites his individual aid, had deferred action until this late hour. There must have been many opportunities for striking an effective blow before this. It may have been, however, that he contemplated a grand *coup d'etat* when matters should approach a crisis.

These and similar thoughts passed through the brain of Mendez, while standing too far back in the gloom to be detected, watching the party and listening to their conversation.

The words were disappointing to Mendez, for they gave him no knowledge not possessed before. They referred to the expected pursuit by the soldiers and the plan for ambuscading them, whenever they should penetrate far enough into the mountains to

render the success of the Apaches beyond question. He heard nothing about the stolen child, and was, therefore, in as much ignorance of his fate or whereabouts as before.

The one indispensable step remained for Mendez to establish communication with his friend; that accomplished, and the prospects would become the brightest. But as matters stood, the task was beyond the skill of the wonderful scout. The most guarded signal that he could make was certain to be heard by the hostiles, at the same instant it reached Cemuri; and, instead of proving a help, must overthrow everything.

His only possible hope was that the party would break up by and by and leave Cemuri to himself. If that should take place, the object could be readily attained. The belief that something of the kind would occur held Mendez like a statue, during nearly all the long period he was absent from Lieutenant Decker and Mr. Freeman. He showed the patience of the Esquimau waiting by the air hole, in the ice for the appearance of the nose of the seal.

The experience of the scout was another illustration of the truth that everything comes to him who waits. After awhile Maroz stole away in the gloom, leaving the couple alone. By and by he returned and Ceballos took a hand. They reported that the soldiers were not yet near, and were likely to push their pursuit until the night was further along. All this time not the first reference, so far as Mendez could learn, was made to the little captive.

Then, when the scout was looking for Cemuri to start off on his reconnoissance, a fourth Apache suddenly appeared in camp. He was from the main body, further back in the mountains, and he remained a half hour, discussing business with the others, and making sure that no possible miscarriage could occur in the plan laid for the overthrow of their pursuers.

But the messenger finally left, and then Cemuri set out to look after matters, disappearing in the wood in the shadowy manner that his predecessors had done.

The opportunity had come at last, and it need not be told how Mendez improved it. He and his former friend met within a hundred yards of the camp, and that which has been told at the beginning of this chapter was made clear to the scout, confirming the suspicions he had formed while playing the part of eavesdropper.

All the information the latter sought was speedily given to him, and, parting from his companion for a time, he made his way to his other friends and told them the amazing story.

Maurice Freeman was so overcome that he was forced to sit down until he could regain mastery of himself. Even Lieutenant Decker lost his facetiousness for the time, and stood with open mouth and staring eyes, unable at first to ask the questions that rapidly took form in his brain.

Mendez was a little foggy, as before, in describing the occurrences of the preceding night, but the

officer suspected the truth, which, if fully told, would have humiliated the brave fellow. He forbore to question him on the point, for it was of little importance.

Cemuri was not present at this interview, but was only a short way off, awaiting the return of his companion. Telling his friends that the two would soon be with them, Mendez withdrew, and they were again left to themselves.

"It is the most wonderful thing I ever knew," remarked Mr. Freeman, in an awed tone; "in all my calculations and surmises, I never deemed this among the possibilities."

"It would have been still more remarkable had you done so," replied the lieutenant; "it begins to look as if you will recover your little boy."

"I hardly dare believe it," said the parent, with a shiver of anxious hope, "and yet why not?"

"I think I understand the *motif* of those fellows in taking the extraordinary course they did. Maroz and Ceballos, I needn't tell you, are among the worst Apaches that ever lived, and that is a tremendous statement. They saw that if they allowed the child to pass into the hands of the principal band, they must surrender control of him. In the complications likely to follow, it is not impossible that the others would agree to give him up, in order to save their own necks. That would be wise, but at the same time it would rob Maroz and Ceballos of their pet scheme of enjoyment."

"It seems incredible that even an Apache should be so cruel."

“There is nothing which human ingenuity can conceive that is too cruel for an Apache to do. This being so, they did not handicap themselves by keeping your child near them. They were liable to lose him, in the event of a sudden attack, before they could remove him, after the fashion that has been popular among the aborigines, ever since the Miss MacCrea episode, more than a hundred years ago.”

“How readily they might have ended the difficulty by putting him out of the way at once!” exclaimed the parent with a shudder.

“But for their cruelty of disposition, they would have done that. Such a course, however, must have robbed them of the exquisite happiness they are now feasting upon in imagination. So they carried the sleeping fellow, as tenderly as you could have done, to the place among the rocks, within a hundred feet of their camp. There they secured him against molestation from any prowling wild beast, believing he would sleep until morning, though it mattered little whether he did or not, since there is no way by which he could help himself.”

“If I only knew the place,” added the parent, half rising to his feet in his excitement, “I would go thither at once.”

“That is the reason Mendez gave us no hint of its location. I’m afraid, Freeman, he doesn’t rank you as being among the champion scouts of the country.”

“I never laid claim to that honor,” replied the

man, with an earnestness that he would not have shown under other circumstances, “but it is so hard to wait—wait, when there’s no saying what obstacles may arise.”

“You must content your soul with patience as best you can, for Mendez is running this administration, and no one can do it better.”

The suspense was briefer than the lieutenant anticipated, though it seemed ten times its real length to the distressed parent. A gentle rustling, evidently made intentionally, caused both to turn their head.

There stood Mendez and Cemuri, and the former held in his dusky palm the dimpled hand of a little boy.

“Oh papa, is that you? Why did you leave me so long?”

“God be thanked!” was the fervent ejaculation of the delighted father, as he seized his child in his arms, pressed him to his breast and kissed him over and over again.

Fulton was sleeping soundly when released from his prison among the rocks, and Mendez started to carry him, but the disturbance awoke the child, and, seeing that he was feverish and frightened, his rescuer allowed him to walk at his side as he wished, while he led him to his father.

When a few minutes later the party was about to start northward, in the direction of the river, with the intention of picking up their ponies on the

way, and seeing Maurice Freeman safe home again with his loved boy, Lieutenant Decker remarked :

“It seems to me we’re forgetting that we are not yet out of the woods ; are we not in danger, Mendez, of being followed by Maroz and Ceballos ?”

“*No !*”

While the little party were silently threading their way northward to the desolate home which, in due time, was illuminated with perfect joy by the return of the child that had been mourned as dead, Captain Shindle and his cavalry were pressing matters from a different direction. The severe ride deferred their assault on the Apache stronghold until later than was desired, but the diversion, described elsewhere, produced the best effects. Under the guidance of the other White Mountain scouts, the hostiles were so effectually entrapped that their overthrow was complete.

In the conflict that followed, half of them were destroyed by the cavalry, who knew it was mercy to the innocent that such heroic measures should be adopted. Those who were not exterminated were captured and taken back as prisoners to the fort.

The disastrous results of the outbreak speedily became known to all the hostiles on the reservation, Maroz and Ceballos, the leaders, being among the first victims to the vengeance they had invoked. The lesson was of the most salutary nature. Others were on the point of joining the hostiles, and, had a temporary advantage come to the band in the mountains, one of the most formidable outbreaks

known in the history of the southwestern frontier would have followed, carrying in its train unutterable woe and suffering.

But the prompt measures of the cavalry, and especially the actions of Mendez and Cemuri, nipped it in the bud.

THE END.

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Facing Death; or, The Hero of the Vaughan Pit. A Tale of the Coal Mines. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"Facing Death" is a story with a purpose. It is intended to show that a lad who makes up his mind firmly and resolutely that he will rise in life, and who is prepared to face toil and ridicule and hardship to carry out his determination, is sure to succeed. The hero of the story is a typical British boy, dogged, earnest, generous, and though "shamefaced" to a degree, is ready to face death in the discharge of duty.

"The tale is well written and well illustrated, and there is much reality in the characters. If any father, clergyman, or schoolmaster is on the lookout for a good book to give as a present to a boy who is worth his salt, this is the book we would recommend."—*Standard.*

Tom Temple's Career. By HORATIO ALGER. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Tom Temple, a bright, self-reliant lad, by the death of his father becomes a boarder at the home of Nathan Middleton, a penurious insurance agent. Though well paid for keeping the boy, Nathan and his wife endeavor to bring Master Tom in line with their parsimonious habits. The lad ingeniously evades their efforts and revolutionizes the household. As Tom is heir to \$40,000, he is regarded as a person of some importance until by an unfortunate combination of circumstances his fortune shrinks to a few hundreds. He leaves Plympton village to seek work in New York, whence he undertakes an important mission to California, around which center the most exciting incidents of his young career. Some of his adventures in the far west are so startling that the reader will scarcely close the book until the last page shall have been reached. The tale is written in Mr. Alger's most fascinating style, and is bound to please the very large class of boys who regard this popular author as a prime favorite.

Maori and Settler: A Story of the New Zealand War. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by ALFRED PEARSE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The Renshaws emigrate to New Zealand during the period of the war with the natives. Wilfrid, a strong, self-reliant, courageous lad, is the mainstay of the household. He has for his friend Mr. Atherton, a botanist and naturalist of herculean strength and unfailing nerve and humor. In the adventures among the Maoris, there are many breathless moments in which the odds seem hopelessly against the party, but they succeed in establishing themselves happily in one of the pleasant New Zealand valleys.

"Brimful of adventure, of humorous and interesting conversation, and vivid pictures of colonial life."—*Schoolmaster*.

Julian Mortimer: A Brave Boy's Struggle for Home and Fortune. By HARRY CASTLEMON. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Here is a story that will warm every boy's heart. There is mystery enough to keep any lad's imagination wound up to the highest pitch. The scene of the story lies west of the Mississippi River, in the days when emigrants made their perilous way across the great plains to the land of gold. One of the startling features of the book is the attack upon the wagon train by a large party of Indians. Our hero is a lad of uncommon nerve and pluck, a brave young American in every sense of the word. He enlists and holds the reader's sympathy from the outset. Surrounded by an unknown and constant peril, and assisted by the unswerving fidelity of a stalwart trapper, a real rough diamond, our hero achieves the most happy results. Harry Castlemon has written many entertaining stories for boys, and it would seem almost superfluous to say anything in his praise, for the youth of America regard him as a favorite author.

"Carrots:" Just a Little Boy. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. With Illustrations by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"One of the cleverest and most pleasing stories it has been our good fortune to meet with for some time. Carrots and his sister are delightful little beings, whom to read about is at once to become very fond of."—*Examiner*.

"A genuine children's book; we've seen 'em seize it, and read it greedily. Children are first-rate critics, and thoroughly appreciate Walter Crane's illustrations."—*Punch*.

Mopsa the Fairy. By JEAN INGELOW. With Eight page Illustrations. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"Mrs. Ingelow is, to our mind, the most charming of all living writers for children, and 'Mopsa' alone ought to give her a kind of pre-emptive right to the love and gratitude of our young folks. It requires genius to conceive a purely imaginary work which must of necessity deal with the supernatural, without running into a mere riot of fantastic absurdity; but genius Miss Ingelow has and the story of 'Jack' is as careless and joyous, but as delicate, as a picture of childhood."—*Eclectic*.

A Jaunt Through Java: The Story of a Journey to the Sacred Mountain. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00

The central interest of this story is found in the thrilling adventures of two cousins, Hermon and Eustace Hadley, on their trip across the island of Java, from Samarang to the Sacred Mountain. In a land where the Royal Bengal tiger runs at large; where the rhinoceros and other fierce beasts are to be met with at unexpected moments; it is but natural that the heroes of this book should have a lively experience. Hermon not only distinguishes himself by killing a full grown tiger at short range, but meets with the most startling adventure of the journey. There is much in this narrative to instruct as well as entertain the reader, and so deftly has Mr. Ellis used his material that there is not a dull page in the book. The two heroes are brave, manly young fellows, bubbling over with boyish independence. They cope with the many difficulties that arise during the trip in a fearless way that is bound to win the admiration of every lad who is so fortunate as to read their adventures.

Wrecked on Spider Island; or, How Ned Rogers Found the Treasure. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

A "down-east" plucky lad who ships as cabin boy, not from love of adventure, but because it is the only course remaining by which he can gain a livelihood. While in his bunk, seasick, Ned Rogers hears the captain and mate discussing their plans for the willful wreck of the brig in order to gain the insurance. Once it is known he is in possession of the secret the captain maroons him on Spider Island, explaining to the crew that the boy is afflicted with leprosy. While thus involuntarily playing the part of a Crusoe, Ned discovers a wreck submerged in the sand, and overhauling the timbers for the purpose of gathering material with which to build a hut finds a considerable amount of treasure. Raising the wreck; a voyage to Havana under sail; shipping there a crew and running for Savannah; the attempt of the crew to seize the little craft after learning of the treasure on board, and, as a matter of course, the successful ending of the journey, all serve to make as entertaining a story of sea-life as the most captious boy could desire.

Geoff and Jim: A Story of School Life. By ISMAY THORN. Illustated by A. G. WALKER. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"This is a prettily told story of the life spent by two motherless bairns at a small preparatory school. Both Geoff and Jim are very lovable characters, only Jim is the more so; and the scrapes he gets into and the trials he endures will, no doubt, interest a large circle of young readers."—*Church Times*.

"This is a capital children's story, the characters well portrayed, and the book tastefully bound and well illustrated."—*Schoolmaster*.

"The story can be heartily recommended as a present for boys."—*Standard*.

The Castaways; or, On the Florida Reefs. By JAMES OTIS.

12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

This tale smacks of the salt sea. It is just the kind of story that the majority of boys yearn for. From the moment that the Sea Queen dispenses with the services of the tug in lower New York bay till the breeze leaves her becalmed off the coast of Florida, one can almost hear the whistle of the wind through her rigging, the creak of her straining cordage as she heels to the leeward, and feel her rise to the snow-capped waves which her sharp bow cuts into twin streaks of foam. Off Marquesas Keys she floats in a dead calm. Ben Clark, the hero of the story, and Jake, the cook, spy a turtle asleep upon the glassy surface of the water. They determine to capture him, and take a boat for that purpose, and just as they succeed in catching him a thick fog cuts them off from the vessel, and then their troubles begin. They take refuge on board a drifting hulk, a storm arises and they are cast ashore upon a low sandy key. Their adventures from this point cannot fail to charm the reader. As a writer for young people Mr. Otis is a prime favorite. His style is captivating, and never for a moment does he allow the interest to flag. In "The Castaways" he is at his best.

Tom Thatcher's Fortune. By HORATIO ALGER, Jr. 12mc,
cloth, price \$1.00.

Like all of Mr. Alger's heroes, Tom Thatcher is a brave, ambitious, unselfish boy. He supports his mother and sister on meager wages earned as a shoe-pegger in John Simpson's factory. The story begins with Tom's discharge from the factory, because Mr. Simpson felt annoyed with the lad for interrogating him too closely about his missing father. A few days afterward Tom learns that which induces him to start overland for California with the view of probing the family mystery. He meets with many adventures. Ultimately he returns to his native village, bringing consternation to the soul of John Simpson, who only escapes the consequences of his villainy by making full restitution to the man whose friendship he had betrayed. The story is told in that entertaining way which has made Mr. Alger's name a household word in so many homes.

Birdie: A Tale of Child Life. By H. L. CHILDE PEMBERTON.

Illustrated by H. W. RAINNEY. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"The story is quaint and simple, but there is a freshness about it that makes one hear again the ringing laugh and the cheery shout of children at play which charmed his earlier years."—*New York Express*.

Popular Fairy Tales. By the BROTHERS GRIMM Profusely

Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"From first to last, almost without exception, these stories are delightful."
—*Athenaeum*.

With Lafayette at Yorktown: A Story of How Two Boys Joined the Continental Army. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The two boys are from Portsmouth, N. H., and are introduced in August, 1781, when on the point of leaving home to enlist in Col. Scammell's regiment, then stationed near New York City. Their method of traveling is on horseback, and the author has given an interesting account of what was expected from boys in the Colonial days. The lads, after no slight amount of adventure, are sent as messengers—not soldiers—into the south to find the troops under Lafayette. Once with that youthful general they are given employment as spies, and enter the British camp, bringing away valuable information. The pictures of camp-life are carefully drawn, and the portrayal of Lafayette's character is thoroughly well done. The story is wholesome in tone, as are all of Mr. Otis' works. There is no lack of exciting incident which the youthful reader craves, but it is healthful excitement brimming with facts which every boy should be familiar with, and while the reader is following the adventures of Ben Jaffreys and Ned Allen he is acquiring a fund of historical lore which will remain in his memory long after that which he has memorized from text-books has been forgotten.

Lost in the Canon: Sam Willett's Adventures on the Great Colorado. By ALFRED R. CALHOUN. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

This story hinges on a fortune left to Sam Willett, the hero, and the fact that it will pass to a disreputable relative if the lad dies before he shall have reached his majority. The Vigilance Committee of Hurley's Gulch arrest Sam's father and an associate for the crime of murder. Their lives depend on the production of the receipt given for money paid. This is in Sam's possession at the camp on the other side of the cañon. A messenger is dispatched to get it. He reaches the lad in the midst of a fearful storm which floods the cañon. His father's peril urges Sam to action. A raft is built on which the boy and his friends essay to cross the torrent. They fail to do so, and a desperate trip down the stream ensues. How the party finally escape from the horrors of their situation and Sam reaches Hurley's Gulch in the very nick of time, is described in a graphic style that stamps Mr. Calhoun as a master of his art.

Jack: A Topsy Turvy Story. By C. M. CRAWLEY-BOEVEY
With upward of Thirty Illustrations by H. J. A. MILES
12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"The illustrations deserve particular mention, as they add largely to the interest of this amusing volume for children. Jack falls asleep with his mind full of the subject of the fishpond, and is very much surprised presently to find himself an inhabitant of Waterworld, where he goes through wonderful and edifying adventures. A handsome and pleasant book."—*Literary World*

Search for the Silver City: A Tale of Adventure in Yucatan.

By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Two American lads, Teddy Wright and Neal Emery, embark on the steam yacht Day Dream for a short summer cruise to the tropics. Homeward bound the yacht is destroyed by fire. All hands take to the boats, but during the night the boat is cast upon the coast of Yucatan. They come across a young American named Cummings, who entertains them with the story of the wonderful Silver City, of the Chan Santa Cruz Indians. Cummings proposes with the aid of a faithful Indian ally to brave the perils of the swamp and carry off a number of the golden images from the temples. Pursued with relentless vigor for days their situation is desperate. At last their escape is effected in an astonishing manner. Mr. Otis has built his story on an historical foundation. It is so full of exciting incidents that the reader is quite carried away with the novelty and realism of the narrative.

Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Thrown upon his own resources Frank Fowler, a poor boy, bravely determines to make a living for himself and his foster-sister Grace. Going to New York he obtains a situation as cash boy in a dry goods store. He renders a service to a wealthy old gentleman named Wharton, who takes a fancy to the lad. Frank, after losing his place as cash boy, is enticed by an enemy to a lonesome part of New Jersey and held a prisoner. This move recoils upon the plotter, for it leads to a clue that enables the lad to establish his real identity. Mr. Alger's stories are not only unusually interesting, but they convey a useful lesson of pluck and manly independence.

Budd Boyd's Triumph; or, the Boy Firm of Fox Island. By WILLIAM P. CHIPPEN. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The scene of this story is laid on the upper part of Narragansett Bay, and the leading incidents have a strong salt water flavor. Owing to the conviction of his father for forgery and theft, Budd Boyd is compelled to leave his home and strike out for himself. Chance brings Budd in contact with Judd Floyd. The two boys, being ambitious and clear sighted, form a partnership to catch and sell fish. The scheme is successfully launched, but the unexpected appearance on the scene of Thomas Bagsley, the man whom Budd believes guilty of the crimes attributed to his father, leads to several disagreeable complications that nearly caused the lad's ruin. His pluck and good sense, however, carry him through his troubles. In following the career of the boy firm of Boyd & Floyd, the youthful reader will find a useful lesson—that industry and perseverance are bound to lead to ultimate success.

The Errand Boy; or, How Phil Brent Won Success. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The career of "The Errand Boy" embraces the city adventures of a smart country lad who at an early age was abandoned by his father. Philip was brought up by a kind-hearted innkeeper named Brent. The death of Mrs. Brent paved the way for the hero's subsequent troubles. Accident introduces him to the notice of a retired merchant in New York, who not only secures him the situation of errand boy but thereafter stands as his friend. An unexpected turn of fortune's wheel, however, brings Philip and his father together. In "The Errand Boy" Philip Brent is possessed of the same sterling qualities so conspicuous in all of the previous creations of this delightful writer for our youth.

The Slate Picker: The Story of a Boy's Life in the Coal Mines. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

This is a story of a boy's life in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. There are many thrilling situations, notably that of Ben Burton's leap into the "lion's mouth"—the yawning shute in the breakers—to escape a beating at the hands of the savage Spilkins, the overseer. Gracie Gordon is a little angel in rags, Terence O'Dowd is a manly, sympathetic lad, and Enoch Evans, the miner-poet, is a big-hearted, honest fellow, a true friend to all whose burdens seem too heavy for them to bear. Ben Burton, the hero, had a hard road to travel, but by grit and energy he advanced step by step until he found himself called upon to fill the position of chief engineer of the Kohinoor Coal Company.

A Runaway Brig; or, An Accidental Cruise. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"A Runaway Brig" is a sea tale, pure and simple, and that's where it strikes a boy's fancy. The reader can look out upon the wide shimmering sea as it flashes back the sunlight, and imagine himself afloat with Harry Vandyne, Walter Morse, Jim Libby and that old shell-back, Bob Brace, on the brig Bonita, which lands on one of the Bahama keys. Finally three strangers steal the craft, leaving the rightful owners to shift for themselves aboard a broken-down tug. The boys discover a mysterious document which enables them to find a buried treasure, then a storm comes on and the tug is stranded. At last a yacht comes in sight and the party with the treasure is taken off the lonely key. The most exacting youth is sure to be fascinated with this entertaining story.

Fairy Tales and Stories. By HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"If I were asked to select a child's library I should name these three volumes 'English,' 'Celtic,' and 'Indian Fairy Tales,' with Grimm and Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales."—*Independent*.

The Island Treasure ; or, Harry Darrel's Fortune. By FRANK H. CONVERSE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Harry Darrel, an orphan, having received a nautical training on a school-ship, is bent on going to sea with a boyish acquaintance named Dan Plunket. A runaway horse changes his prospects. Harry saves Dr. Gregg from drowning and the doctor presents his preserver with a bit of property known as Gregg's Island, and makes the lad sailing-master of his sloop yacht. A piratical hoard is supposed to be hidden somewhere on the island. After much search and many thwarted plans, at last Dan discovers the treasure and is the means of finding Harry's father. Mr. Converse's stories possess a charm of their own which is appreciated by lads who delight in good healthy tales that smack of salt water.

The Boy Explorers : The Adventures of Two Boys in Alaska. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Two boys, Raymond and Spencer Manning, travel from San Francisco to Alaska to join their father in search of their uncle, who, it is believed, was captured and detained by the inhabitants of a place called the "Heart of Alaska." On their arrival at Sitka the boys with an Indian guide set off across the mountains. The trip is fraught with perils that test the lads' courage to the utmost. Reaching the Yukon River they build a raft and float down the stream, entering the Mysterious River, from which they barely escape with their lives, only to be captured by natives of the Heart of Alaska. All through their exciting adventures the lads demonstrate what can be accomplished by pluck and resolution, and their experience makes one of the most interesting tales ever written.

The Treasure Finders : A Boy's Adventures in Nicaragua. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Roy and Dean Coloney, with their guide Tongla, leave their father's indigo plantation to visit the wonderful ruins of an ancient city. The boys eagerly explore the dismantled temples of an extinct race and discover three golden images cunningly hidden away. They escape with the greatest difficulty; by taking advantage of a festive gathering they seize a canoe and fly down the river. Eventually they reach safety with their golden prizes. Mr. Otis is the prince of story tellers, for he handles his material with consummate skill. We doubt if he has ever written a more entertaining story than "The Treasure Finders."

Household Fairy Tales. By the BROTHERS GRIMM. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"As a collection of fairy tales to delight children of all ages this work ranks second to none."—*Daily Graphic*.

Dan the Newsboy. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The reader is introduced to Dan Mordaunt and his mother living in a poor tenement, and the lad is pluckily trying to make ends meet by selling papers in the streets of New York. A little heiress of six years is confided to the care of the Mordaunts. At the same time the lad obtains a position in a wholesale house. He soon demonstrates how valuable he is to the firm by detecting the bookkeeper in a bold attempt to rob his employers. The child is kidnaped and Dan tracks the child to the house where she is hidden, and rescues her. The wealthy aunt of the little heiress is so delighted with Dan's courage and many good qualities that she adopts him as her heir, and the conclusion of the book leaves the hero on the high road to every earthly desire.

Tony the Hero: A Brave Boy's Adventure with a Tramp. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Tony, a sturdy bright-eyed boy of fourteen, is under the control of Rudolph Rugg, a thorough rascal, shiftless and lazy, spending his time tramping about the country. After much abuse Tony runs away and gets a job as stable boy in a country hotel. Tony is heir to a large estate in England, and certain persons find it necessary to produce proof of the lad's death. Rudolph for a consideration hunts up Tony and throws him down a deep well. Of course Tony escapes from the fate provided for him, and by a brave act makes a rich friend, with whom he goes to England, where he secures his rights and is prosperous. The fact that Mr. Alger is the author of this entertaining book will at once recommend it to all juvenile readers.

A Young Hero; or, Fighting to Win. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

This story tells how a valuable solid silver service was stolen from the Misses Perkinpine, two very old and simple minded ladies. Fred Sheldon, the hero of this story and a friend of the old ladies, undertakes to discover the thieves and have them arrested. After much time spent in detective work, he succeeds in discovering the silver plate and winning the reward for its restoration. During the narrative a circus comes to town and a thrilling account of the escape of the lion from its cage, with its recapture, is told in Mr. Ellis' most fascinating style. Every boy will be glad to read this delightful book.

The Days of Bruce: A Story from Scottish History. By GRACE AGUILAR. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"There is a delightful freshness, sincerity and vivacity about all of Grace Aguilar's stories which cannot fail to win the interest and admiration of every lover of good reading." —*Boston Beacon*.

Tom the Bootblack; or, The Road to Success. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

A bright, enterprising lad was Tom the bootblack. He was not at all ashamed of his humble calling, though always on the lookout to better himself. His guardian, old Jacob Morton, died, leaving him a small sum of money and a written confession that Tom, instead of being of humble origin, was the son and heir of a deceased Western merchant, and had been defrauded out of his just rights by an unscrupulous uncle. The lad started for Cincinnati to look up his heritage. But three years passed away before he obtained his first clue. Mr. Grey, the uncle, did not hesitate to employ a ruffian to kill the lad. The plan failed, and Gilbert Grey, once Tom the bootblack, came into a comfortable fortune. This is one of Mr. Alger's best stories.

Captured by Zulus: A story of Trapping in Africa. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.60.

This story details the adventures of two lads, Dick Elsworth and Bob Harvey, in the wilds of South Africa, for the purpose of obtaining a supply of zoological curiosities. By stratagem the Zulus capture Dick and Bob and take them to their principal kraal or village. The lads escape death by digging their way out of the prison hut by night. They are pursued, and after a rough experience the boys eventually rejoin the expedition and take part in several wild animal hunts. The Zulus finally give up pursuit and the expedition arrives at the coast without further trouble. Mr. Prentice has a delightful method of blending fact with fiction. He tells exactly how wild-beast collectors secure specimens on their native stamping grounds, and these descriptions make very entertaining reading.

Tom the Ready; or, Up from the Lowest. By RANDOLPH HILL. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

This is a dramatic narrative of the unaided rise of a fearless, ambitious boy from the lowest round of fortune's ladder—the gate of the poorhouse—to wealth and the governorship of his native State. Thomas Seacombe begins life with a purpose. While yet a schoolboy he conceives and presents to the world the germ of the Overland Express Co. At the very outset of his career jealousy and craft seek to blast his promising future. Later he sets out to obtain a charter for a railroad line in connection with the express business. Now he realizes what it is to match himself against capital. Yet he wins and the railroad is built. Only an uncommon nature like Tom's could successfully oppose such a combine. How he manages to win the battle is told by Mr. Hill in a masterful way that thrills the reader and holds his attention and sympathy to the end.

Roy Gilbert's Sea-ch: A Tale of the Great Lakes. By WM. P. CHIPMAN. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

A deep mystery hangs over the parentage of Roy Gilbert. He arranges with two schoolmates to make a tour of the Great Lakes on a steam launch. The three boys leave Erie on the launch and visit many points of interest on the lakes. Soon afterward the lad is conspicuous in the rescue of an elderly gentleman and a lady from a sinking yacht. Later on the cruise of the launch is brought to a disastrous termination and the boys narrowly escape with their lives. The hero is a manly, self-reliant boy, whose adventures will be followed with interest.

The Young Scout; The Story of a West Point Lieutenant. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The crafty Apache chief Geronimo but a few years ago was the most terrible scourge of the southwest border. The author has woven, in a tale of thrilling interest, all the incidents of Geronimo's last raid. The hero is Lieutenant James Decker, a recent graduate of West Point. Ambitious to distinguish himself so as to win well-deserved promotion, the young man takes many a desperate chance against the enemy and on more than one occasion narrowly escapes with his life. The story naturally abounds in thrilling situations, and being historically correct, it is reasonable to believe it will find great favor with the boys. In our opinion Mr. Ellis is the best writer of Indian stories now before the public.

Adrift in the Wilds: The Adventures of Two Shipwrecked Boys. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price, \$1.00.

Elwood Brandon and Howard Lawrence, cousins and schoolmates, accompanied by a lively Irishman called O'Rooney, are en route for San Francisco. Off the coast of California the steamer takes fire. The two boys and their companion reach the shore with several of the passengers. While O'Rooney and the lads are absent inspecting the neighborhood O'Rooney has an exciting experience and young Brandon becomes separated from his party. He is captured by hostile Indians, but is rescued by an Indian whom the lads had assisted. This is a very entertaining narrative of Southern California in the days immediately preceding the construction of the Pacific railroads. Mr. Ellis seems to be particularly happy in this line of fiction, and the present story is fully as entertaining as anything he has ever written.

The Red Fairy Book. Edited by ANDREW LANG. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

"A gift-book that will charm any child, and all older folk who have been fortunate enough to retain their taste for the old nursery stories."—*Literary World*.

The Boy Cruisers; or, Paddling in Florida. By ST GEORGE RATHBORNE. 12mo, cloth, price, \$1.00.

Boys who like an admixture of sport and adventure will find this book just to their taste. We promise them that they will not go to sleep over the rattling experiences of Andrew George and Roland Carter, who start on a canoe trip along the Gulf coast, from Key West to Tampa, Florida. Their first adventure is with a pair of rascals who steal their boats. Next they run into a gale in the Gulf and have a lively experience while it lasts. After that they have a lively time with alligators and divers varieties of the finny tribe. Andrew gets into trouble with a band of Seminole Indians and gets away without having his scalp raised. After this there is no lack of fun till they reach their destination. That Mr. Rathborne knows just how to interest the boys is apparent at a glance, and lads who are in search of a rare treat will do well to read this entertaining story.

Guy Harris: The Runaway. By HARRY CASTLEMON. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Guy Harris lived in a small city on the shore of one of the Great Lakes. His head became filled with quixotic notions of going West to hunt grizzlies, in fact, Indians. He is persuaded to go to sea, and gets a glimpse of the rough side of life in a sailor's boarding house. He ships on a vessel and for five months leads a hard life. He deserts his ship at San Francisco and starts out to become a backwoodsman, but rough experiences soon cure him of all desire to be a hunter. At St. Louis he becomes a clerk and for a time he yields to the temptations of a great city. The book will not only interest boys generally on account of its graphic style, but will put many facts before their eyes in a new light. This is one of Castlemon's most attractive stories.

The Train Boy. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Paul Palmer was a wide-awake boy of sixteen who supported his mother and sister by selling books and papers on one of the trains running between Chicago and Milwaukee. He detects a young man named Luke Denton in the act of picking the pocket of a young lady, and also incurs the enmity of his brother Stephen, a worthless follow. Luke and Stephen plot to ruin Paul, but their plans are frustrated. In a railway accident many passengers are killed, but Paul is fortunate enough to assist a Chicago merchant, who out of gratitude takes him into his employ. Paul is sent to manage a mine in Custer City and executes his commission with tact and judgment and is well started on the road to business prominence. This is one of Mr. Alger's most attractive stories and is sure to please all readers.

Joe's Luck : A Boy's Adventures in California. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Without a doubt Joe Mason was a lucky boy, but he deserved the golden chances that fell to his lot, for he had the pluck and ambition to push himself to the front. Joe had but one dollar in the world when he stood despondently on the California Mail Steamship Co.'s dock in New York watching the preparations incident to the departure of the steamer. The same dollar was still Joe's entire capital when he landed in the bustling town of tents and one-story cabins—the San Francisco of '51, and inside of the week the boy was proprietor of a small restaurant earning a comfortable profit. The story is chock full of stirring incidents, while the amusing situations are furnished by Joshua Bickford, from Pumpkin Hollow, and the fellow who modestly styles himself the "Rip-tail Roarer, from Pike Co., Missouri." Mr. Alger never writes a poor book, and "*Joe's Luck*" is certainly one of his best.

Three Bright Girls : A Story of Chance and Mischance. By ANNIE E. ARMSTRONG. With full page Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

By a sudden turn of fortune's wheel the three heroines of this story are brought down from a household of lavish comfort to meet the incessant cares and worries of those who have to eke out a very limited income. And the charm of the story lies in the cheery helpfulness of spirit developed in the girls by their changed circumstances; while the author finds a pleasant ending to all their happy makeshifts.

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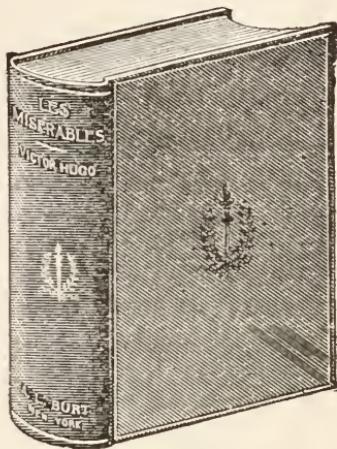
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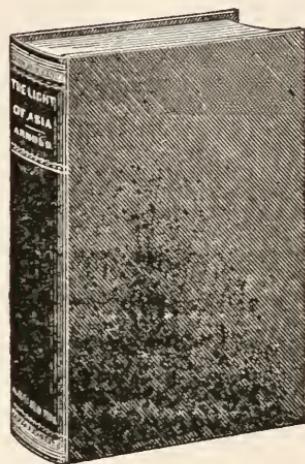
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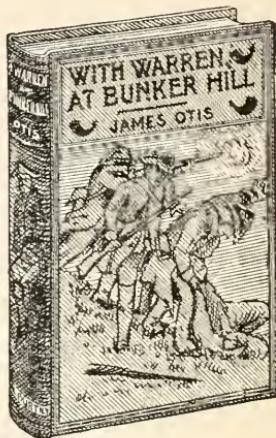
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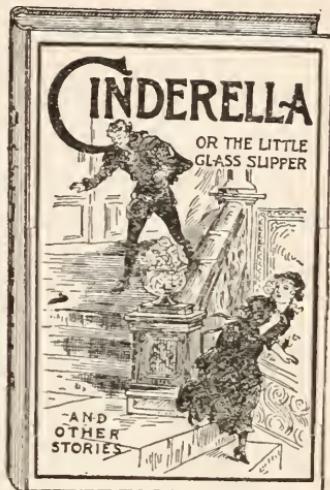
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